

LIBRARY



125 194

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

TOASTS
and
AFTER DINNER
SPEECHES

DUDLEY JENKINS

How to respond to toasts or to make
other public addresses, and how always
to say the right thing in the right way

THE PENN PUBLISHING
COMPANY - PHILADELPHIA

COPYRIGHT
1 9 3 3 B Y
THE PENN
PUBLISHING
COMPANY



Toasts and After Dinner Speeches

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
WHEN YOU HAVE TO TALK	9
SPEECH OUTLINES	63
The Christmas Season	64
Christmas Speech for Lodge	65
New Year's	67
Lincoln's Birthday	71
St. Valentine's Day	73
Washington's Birthday	76
St. Patrick's Day	79
Memorial Day	82
Independence Day	84
Fourth of July	87
Labor Day	89
Armistice Day	94
Thanksgiving	96
For a Beginner	99
SPEECHES FOR SOCIAL OCCASIONS	102
The Wedding Dinner	102
Stag Dinner to a Bridegroom	106

The Engagement	107
Wedding Anniversary	113
Mother's Day	115
Golden Wedding	118
Birthday	122
Welcome to a Distinguished Guest	123
Farewell Dinner	125
Welcome to a Returned Traveler	126
Welcome to a Foreign Visitor	130
Alumni Dinner	132
Dinner for Graduates	134
Town "Booster" Dinner	136
Stag Dinner	138
Chamber of Commerce Dinner	140
Appeal for Charity Funds	143
Veterans' Reunion Banquet	145
On Being Elected President of a Club	147
Athletic Club Dinner	149
Dinner for Winning Team	151
Dinner for the Boss	154
Business Convention Banquet	157
Political Dinner	159
TOASTS	167
AFTER DINNER STORIES AND JOKES	193

INTRODUCTION

THIS volume is addressed to the countless miserable wretches whose lives are being shortened by brooding over the prospect of having to make an after-dinner speech.

The sun is shining, birds are singing, flowers are bursting into bloom. And then the mailman brings the fatal notice: "You're down for a short talk!"

Of course no book can calm the victim's thumping pulse or prevent his brow from breaking out in a lush sweat whenever he thinks of his coming ordeal. No book can make a Henry Ward Beecher or a William Jennings Bryan of him any more than a book can make a second Sara Bernhardt of Tillie Snodgrass who is in hosiery in the Bon Ton Store on Main Street. But it CAN suggest certain basic rules and principles which will enable the unhappy creature to approach his trial with more serenity and confidence, to make less of a spectacle of himself than he expected and to

resume his seat with the thought that maybe it's a pretty good old world after all. Perhaps he'll even make a good speech.

The accompanying sample speeches and outlines are to be used as examples of what to do and what not to do and under no circumstances are to be used as substitutes for original speeches. That way lies danger. For of all the rules that could be formulated for public speaking in all its branches, none is more important than the trite one: "Be yourself." And you can't very well be yourself if you are parroting the words and thoughts of someone else, someone with a different temperament and a different way of expressing his thoughts.

Furthermore, you can't well be natural if you take the rules too seriously. It is quite probable you will need to discard some and substitute others of your own making. In public speaking as in most other lines of human endeavor rules must be adapted to the individual and his own peculiar quirks. It would be as senseless to say that everyone must talk in such and such a way as to say that they must all laugh or eat or cry in a certain manner.

Another thing: Don't let the prospect of failing in your speech frighten you. Don't take yourself and it too seriously. No one at the banquet will. It really won't matter a bit if your speech isn't the masterpiece you had planned. People are always very charitable, especially with a beginner. They won't expect much, so won't be disappointed if they don't get much. And whether it is a good speech or a bad speech, no one will remember what it was all about by the next day. You won't be tarred and feathered. They've all been bored by better speakers and bigger men than you.

.

WHEN YOU HAVE TO TALK

THERE are two occasions when a man finds himself forced to get to his feet and talk in public—when he has something to say and when he has to say something, as Brander Matthews puts it. Most after-dinner speeches and toasts fall in the latter class and are productive of by far the greatest amount of woe to the amateur speaker.

He may be asked to “say a few words” on a subject of which he knows nothing and cares less. Or perhaps he is allowed to choose his theme. Whereupon his brain instantly shrivels and to save his life he can think of nothing rational to talk about. Or, most heart-rending of all, he may be called upon out of a clear blue sky to pop to his feet and talk without preparation of any kind.

DON'T BACK OUT

But whatever the circumstances, when you

10 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

are called upon for your "few remarks," give them. It is surprising the number of budding Chauncey Depews who bud nowhere but on paper and in front of their own mirrors. They delve for statistics and information, wrack their brains preparing an interesting and instructive talk, make the house echo with their round periods and gay jollities while rehearsing the masterpiece, and then on the evening of the banquet remember that Willie has a cold, that it would be inconsiderate to leave him alone and that perhaps they'd better give up the idea of attending the banquet, thereby losing not only the time spent in preparation but an opportunity to advance themselves in whatever line of work they are engaged.

The ability to express oneself on one's feet clearly, concisely and entertainingly is becoming of greater importance all the time. More and more are affairs of the business, social and political world being settled over the coffee cups after dinner. More and more is the "little fellow" in an organization being given the chance to climb to the top. And nothing will more quickly advance him and bring him to

the attention of those who have the power to help him than the ability to rise to his feet and say what he thinks without collapsing, stuttering or boring his auditors to tears.

A former Chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh asked a group of engineers what they considered the most important part of a college career. The answer was:

“We suppose that graduates of an engineering school will have some knowledge of the principles of their profession, but we cannot emphasize too strongly the advantage that accrues to men from the ability to think upon their feet; to express extempore a well-thought-out proposition; to adapt themselves and their conversation instantly to changing conditions as they may arise. We value this ability of clear and rapid thinking and expression more highly than anything else.”

So don't throw away the chance. It may mean money, or prestige, or advancement to you later on.

DON'T BE FOOLED

Now that you have been asked to speak and

12 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

have accepted the invitation, don't be misled by the familiar words of the chairman of the program committee that they would appreciate "a few remarks" or "a few words." He means "few," it is true, as compared with a sermon or Fourth of July oration, but he most certainly does not mean "remarks" or "words." He means a speech. And what is more, he means a speech planned as thoroughly and delivered as convincingly and entertainingly as any other form of public address. And unless you make a genuine effort to give the guests that kind of a speech you will be deliberately taking up their time for nothing. They have squirmed into their dinner clothes and trudged from home for the sole purpose of having a good time and they are looking for you to furnish your share of it. It is as much an imposition for a speaker to appear before an audience, even for five minutes, without giving thought to what he is going to say as it would be for a musician to attempt to impress a concert audience with a selection which he has never practiced.

PURPORT OF THE SPEECH

It must not be supposed that because the main purpose of an after-dinner speech is to entertain that it is wholly a trivial affair. All too many of them are, it is true, not only trivial but puerile, with their unending succession of old jokes, which to all too many speakers constitutes the last word in after-dinner speaking.

There is scarcely a trade, business or profession that does not have its union or association, at the meetings and banquets of which the policies and problems of its members are threshed out. Such matters are far from trivial. They affect one's livelihood. Public opinion can be swayed mightily by what is said at such functions. The countless organizations for the reform of this, the advancement of that and the elimination of the other thing depend largely for their publicity and ultimate achievement upon the speeches at their banquets and luncheons. Of course many such organizations are highly trivial in themselves, but many of them are not and the thoughts expressed at such gatherings, though clothed in humor and

14 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

apparent frivolity, can have a profound effect if delivered entertainingly.

MUST BE ENTERTAINING

And there, in a nutshell, is the difference between the after-dinner speech and other forms of public address. The after-dinner speech **MUST** be entertaining. This doesn't mean that it must be humorous or productive of guffaws. It may treat of serious subjects, but such serious subjects must not take themselves too seriously. Like the best forms of advertising, the good after-dinner speech with a serious theme must attract the attention and hold the interest but must not compel action by too obvious and forced means. It should accomplish its secondary purpose—the primary, of course, being to help the group of well-fed, congenial guests enjoy themselves—by suggestion rather than by argument and debate. Argument has no place unless it is used lightly, tactfully and in good spirit. Dry, weighty discussions of ponderous themes are as out of place around the dinner table as are abusive political harangues. Themes, jokes and anec-

dotes distasteful to individuals or groups present are to be avoided like the plague to prevent anything from marring the festive or informative spirit of the occasion.

DON'T SHOW OFF

The purpose of an after-dinner speech being to entertain or to inform, remember that it is the audience and not the speaker who is to be entertained. Apparently the chief purpose of many an old-time spellbinder was to air his own tremendous erudition. He thundered on in might and majesty and only the fact that so many of his auditors were well befogged before the speaking started assured him an audience. Don't try to be cute and clever. Don't talk over the heads of your audience. Don't demonstrate how many big words you know.

GETTING MATERIAL

If you are assigned a subject, read up on it if you know nothing about it to start with. Nothing gives a speaker such confidence as the knowledge that he knows as much as or more

16 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

than his audience and is not talking like a simpleton. If all the speeches are to treat of one topic, don't dig up just enough material for your address and then die a painful death as you listen to preceding speakers nonchalantly reel off the breath-taking facts and figures you had planned to give to an eager world. Nothing will take the wind out of an amateur speaker's sails with more certainty than to be left standing on his feet with nothing to say. If you are to talk for ten minutes, have enough material to last a half-hour and see to it that your outline is flexible enough to allow of a little amending under the table if need be.

If you are granted the privilege of choosing your own subject, it is most important that you select one with which you are familiar and which interests you, provided you are sure it would interest the audience also and would not be out of place on the particular occasion. It is probable that a detailed description of big game hunting would be of little interest to members of the women's Civic Club, although on another occasion such a talk would not be

out of place. The same speech would be of interest to the husbands of the women but would be out of place at a lodge meeting commemorating brothers who had died in the war.

THE IMPROMPTU BUGABOO

The most pitiable creature, as has been said, is the one who is not forewarned that he will be called upon to speak. Many toastmasters and chairmen take a fiendish delight in this form of torture and the fidgetings, squirmings and smirking of their victims seem to give them an unholy joy. But there is little excuse for walking blindly into such a trap. If attending an affair at which there is the slightest possibility of being called upon to speak, it is an easy matter to have your "few extemporaneous remarks" snugly tucked away in the pocket, to be kept there, of course, during their delivery.

It is perilous to trust to the inspiration of the moment to put words into your mouth at such times. It is far more likely to take them out. Have your talk ready, but have it simple and have it short. No one expects much of

18 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

an extemporaneous address either in quality or quantity. Above all, see to it that the talk that is impromptu really sounds as if it is. Talk slowly. Stutter a bit if need be. Dispense with statistics and data that would indicate preparation. Better not memorize the speech, for the tongue will be tempted to run faster than would be humanly possible in a talk thought out on the spur of the moment.

WRITING THE SPEECH

Having selected a topic and gathered material, your work is only one-third done. It must be whipped into logical, interest-provoking shape and then delivered. And unless the first and second steps are done thoroughly, nothing but great personal charm and magnetism can make its delivery a success. Just as there are many speakers with such personality that they can make engrossing speeches without saying anything, so there are countless speakers with little or no stage presence who turn out masterly addresses solely because they have decided on interesting things to say and have marshaled them in logical, coherent order.

In other words, they know what they intend to say and how they intend to say it.

William Dean Howells, writing of Mark Twain's methods, says:

‘He knew that from the beginning of oratory the orator's spontaneity was for the silence and solitude of the closet where he mused his words to an imaginary audience; that this was the use of orators from Demosthenes and Cicero up and down. He studied every word and syllable. He studied every tone and gesture and he forecast the result with the real audience from its result on the imagined audience. Therefore it was beautiful to see and to hear him. He rejoiced in the pleasure he gave and in the blows of surprise he dealt and because he had his end in mind, he knew where to stop.’

METHODS OF PREPARATION

There are three ways of preparing a speech. First, to write it out in full and memorize it verbatim by frequent rehearsals in private. This method is not recommended to any but the most timid and fearful who would point-

20 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

blank refuse to talk under any other circumstances. Although if everything goes right it has the advantage of getting the speaker through his talk in the least possible time and with the least possible embarrassment, it offers pitfalls. If the speaker's memory fails him, the result is apt to be tragic. If previous speakers steal his remarks from under him, he either must revise his speech in his head or repeat what has already been said, either of them being a dangerous feat for the peace of mind of the beginner.

The memorized speech, too, is apt to lack that spontaneity and informal charm which is the very life of after-dinner speaking.

Furthermore, the speech that is written out and memorized is likely to consist of written instead of spoken language, and there is all the difference in the world between them. Sentences that flow beautifully and smoothly on the printed page frequently sound stilted and cold when spoken from the platform and are lacking in conviction. That is the reason so many high-priced writers fail so dismally when called upon to write for the stage or screen.

They just can't write the way people talk. "Have you determined to retire?" would pass in a book, but "Are you going to bed?" would sound much better from the stage.

NOT TOO LONG

When written and committed to memory, the speech itself is inclined to be too long and the construction too involved. Five to ten minutes is long enough for the average after-dinner address, while a beginner who is none too sure of himself would do well to limit himself to two or three minutes.

After the speech has been memorized, it is a good idea to practice it on members of the family to make sure it is not too long, too wordy and too literary in construction.

THE OUTLINE METHOD

The second method is to prepare a written outline of the principal points and anecdotes to be brought out and to rehearse from this outline until one has a thorough grasp of the subject. During the actual delivery of the address the notes can be glanced at from time

22 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

to time or, preferably, kept close at hand to be consulted in an emergency. Many experienced speakers make a point of arriving at the banquet room ahead of the diners and jotting down their outline on the back of a menu card. This can be held in the hand while speaking and glanced at casually if necessary without anyone being the wiser.

TRUSTING TO LUCK

The third method consists in marshaling the material mentally and trusting to the occasion to find the best way to express it. This method allows the greatest spontaneity and informality but is not recommended for beginners not schooled in thinking rapidly on their feet. But if one has the self-confidence and fluency to attempt it, a speech of this kind is quite likely to be more sparkling and zestful than any of the others. It allows greater opportunity for repartee and tactful joshing of the toastmaster, guest of honor and previous speakers. Indeed some of the most popular after-dinner speakers owe their popularity almost wholly to their

continual good-natured digs at their fellow diners.

When this form of humor is resorted to the speaker would do well to vary the jibes at others with an equal number of pointed digs at himself, to avoid giving offense. Nearly everyone is interested in the triflingly unimportant things his fellow man thinks, feels and does. Newspaper columnists realize it and capitalize it by a liberal use of the pronoun "I" and the after-dinner speaker who can josh himself and talk about himself without appearing to be bragging need look no further for a subject for his address.

Whichever form of preparation is chosen, the salutation, introduction and conclusion of the address should be, if not memorized, at least most thoroughly planned, for these portions are apt to cause the greatest confusion to the tyro.

THE SALUTATION

The salutation, or acknowledgment of the toastmaster's introduction, must under no circumstances be omitted. To do so stamps one

24 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

as discourteous or inexperienced. A salutation that is mechanically parroted is almost as bad as none at all. It is not necessary to wrack your brains to see how many groups and individuals you can greet personally. The speaker who rises ponderously to his feet, bows solemnly and chants: "Mr. Toastmaster, honorable judges of the Montgomery county courts, members of the Republican county committee, officers and members of the Civic Club, citizens of Squeedunk, ladies and gentlemen," merely sets himself down as a pompous bore right at the start. Address the toastmaster and the organization or individual acting as host and you will be doing your full duty, unless a guest of particular prominence is present, when it would be courteous to include him in the salutation.

THE INTRODUCTION

After the salutation comes the introduction, and it is these first few sentences that are fraught with the greatest difficulty for the inexperienced speaker. It is on the first few words that he depends to attract attention,

arouse interest or win the friendship of an audience that is hostile.

Henry Ward Beecher's address in Liverpool in 1863 is an excellent example of the latter purpose. Notice how the first sentence arouses interest by its use of the surprise attack and how it goes on by subtle compliments to persuade the audience to give him friendly attention.

"Now, personally, it is a matter of very little consequence to me whether I speak here to-night or not. (Laughter and cheers.) But one thing is very certain: If you do permit me to speak here tonight you will hear some very plain talking. (Applause and hisses.) You will not find me a man that dared to speak about Great Britain 3,000 miles off and then is afraid to speak to Great Britain when he stands on her shores. (Immense applause and hisses.) And if I do not mistake the tone and temper of Englishmen, they had rather have a man who opposes them in a manly way than a sneak that agrees with them in an unmanly way. (Applause.) Now, if I can carry you with me by sound conviction, I shall be im-

mensely glad, but if I cannot carry you with me by facts and sound argument, I do not wish you to go with me at all; and all that I ask is simply fair play." (Applause and voice: "You shall have it, too.")

The difficulties of the introduction are complicated by the frequent seeming necessity of replying to some personal witticism or alleged witticism in the toastmaster's introduction. Naturally it is impossible to be prepared for all such emergencies, although it is said of President George E. Vincent of the University of Minnesota that he prepared eight introductions to his speech at an alumni dinner so as to be prepared for whatever jibes and pleasantries the toastmaster might throw his way.

However, it is advisable for the speaker who has little practice in this sort of thing to pass over the toastmaster's unforeseen remarks and get on to his prepared introduction. To attempt to reply in kind is all too apt to result in a tactless or senseless remark.

DON'T GUSH

Although courtesy and geniality are pre-

requisites of a good introduction, and although your hosts must be thanked for the food and entertainment they are furnishing you, an introduction of gushing insincerities is as bad as none at all. The New York banker who awesomely bleats: "My friends of Dobbs Corners,—for I like to think of you all as my friends (he never heard of Dobbs Corners until a week ago)—words cannot express my profound appreciation of the honor you have accorded me in inviting me to address the graduating class of your high school. It is a memory that I shall cherish till my dying day," gets off to a bad start. The prime purpose of the introduction is to establish friendly relations between speaker and audience and they cannot be established by fulsome, insincere flattery.

GET DOWN TO BUSINESS

Another purpose of the introduction is to establish friendly relations between the audience and the subject to be discussed, if any. To this end avoid useless, long-winded introductions and those that insult the intelligence of your listeners. All too many speakers,

28 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

especially of the silver-tongue orator type, plunge into such flights of elocution, reminiscence and anecdote that the bored and bewildered listeners have no inkling of what the talk is all about until they have lost all interest in the proceedings.

Many introductions insult the intelligence of an audience by the speaker's unintentional air of superiority and omniscience. The author recently heard a welfare worker, not a physician, consume fifteen minutes of the time of four hundred doctors at a banquet explaining in detail that lack of sunlight and proper diet adversely affects the bodies of growing children and that if we expect to raise a virile younger generation we must take thought for the bodily welfare of our children in their formative years, etc., etc., etc. It was as if a drug store clerk had solemnly told a group of veteran engineers that good eyesight and color sense are necessary qualifications for a successful engineman.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE AUDIENCE

In that connection it is well to point out that talking down to the audience in the body of

the speech as well as in the introduction is not only execrable taste but spells almost sure failure for the address. Don't assume by word or manner that your audience is not as well-read as you are. Don't explain every point, theory and reference even though you are sure many of your listeners do not understand. They will feel complimented by your assumption that they are well-read. Experienced travel lecturers, even though they are sure few if any of their audience have visited the scenes they are describing, never say: "Now I don't suppose any of you folks have ever been here." It is always, "Doubtless you recall the last time you were in so-and-so——" or "The House of Parliament. Looks just about the same as the last time you saw it, doesn't it?"

One celebrated speaker makes it a point to include several classical quotations and historical and literary references in every address, making no attempt to define or explain them and alternating familiar, every-day quotations and references with highly unfamiliar ones. It is a subtle compliment that wins friends if

30 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

it is not overdone and if the speaker does not have to step out of character to do it.

KINDS OF INTRODUCTION

There are two broad types of introduction—the personal and the general. The personal is the more informal and is the more common at functions where the subjects discussed are of less importance than the spirit of good-fellowship and geniality of the occasion. In this type the speaker opens by references to himself, others present or the organization sponsoring the affair. It offers more opportunity for compliment and praise and if kept within the bounds of modesty if the speaker is dealing with himself and within the bounds of sincerity and good taste in the case of others, it is most effective.

But in the personal introduction avoid a too humble note. Do not dwell at length on your oratorical shortcomings and your inability to do justice to your theme. It seldom rings true, thus violating one of the cardinal rules of public speaking—be sincere.

It is especially offensive in the case of

speakers of repute and those who have a prominent place on the program, whether he is paid for his talk or not. When such a speaker adopts a too-humble rôle he arouses the subconscious antagonism of his audience right at the start. His listeners naturally think, consciously or unconsciously, "If he is not competent to speak, why does he take up so much of our time when he knows he is no good?" Let your speech speak for itself.

The introduction of Woodrow Wilson's address on "The Bible and Progress" at Denver is an example of a graceful introduction of this kind. Notice that it does not servilely flatter the audience and that it does not make the speaker sound like an incompetent imposter who has no right to be taking up his listeners' time. In short, it is dignified but interest-provoking.

"The thought that entered my mind first as I came into this great room this evening framed itself in a question—why should this great body of people have come together upon this solemn night? There is nothing here to be seen. There is nothing delectable here to be

32 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

heard. Why should you run together in a great host when all that is to be spoken of is the history of a familiar book? But as I have sat and looked upon this great body of people I have thought of the very suitable circumstance that here upon this platform sat a little group of ministers of the gospel lost in this great throng . . .”

A polished introduction in the lighter vein is Strickland Gillilan's address before the Ohio Society in Philadelphia. Notice how this master of the after-dinner speech employs paradox and “opposite” statements to catch the ear and arouse the interest.

“I shall begin by omitting something. That which an after-dinner speaker omits is far more vital than what he emits. I shall omit the customary statement that I am glad to be here. That statement is usually made to cover embarrassment. And while it might cover an embarrassment of ordinary acreage it wouldn't make a patch on mine at this moment. Besides, I have made that statement so often, perfunctorily, only to find afterwards that I was alone in my joy over my presence, that I

have eliminated it permanently from my stock come-packed banquet speech. . . . The ideal banquet speech is one that subtracts heavily from the sum-total of human knowledge. If one says something wise and deep, it is said obscurely and misunderstood; or said too clearly, and somebody is peeved and begins slinging mud. One should say nothing, say it clearly, firmly, and stand by it."

BEWARE OF JOKES

The introduction may open with a joke or anecdote provided, always provided, the joke is fresh and you can get it across with a considerable degree of humor. If you can't, concentrate on one GOOD, NEW joke during your entire talk, or omit them altogether. There is nothing more boring than the strings of old and poor jokes laboriously spun off by people who should be prohibited by law from ever telling one.

If you do utilize jokes, be sure they will not give offense to individuals, groups or nationalities present. Some races are particularly touchy when it comes to having fun poked at

34 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

them. You can go as far as you like with the Scotch; they make and tell more jokes about their own alleged tightness than do others. Neither do the Jews object to joshing dealing with their money-making abilities. Irish, on the other hand, are frequently sensitive.

THE GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This type of introduction is more formal and is used when the subject of a speech overshadows in importance the speaker and the occasion. In this type of address the speaker's personality is largely submerged. Introductions of this kind should plunge into the subject immediately with little or no time devoted to eulogies and trivialities.

In Martin Knapp's address at the Railway Business Association in New York, notice how he dispenses with all extraneous remarks and immediately outlines the points to be covered in his discussion.

"The question of railway rates, that is to say, of railroad revenues, involves vastly more than the direct interest of shippers or shareholders. In a very real sense, in a sense which

is fortunately coming to be better understood, it is a great question of national policy second to none in its economic importance. Speaking only for myself, and without reference to the pending controversy over rate advances or any other concrete instance, I suggest three aspects of this question which are of immediate and intense public concern. If our country is to grow and prosper as it ought, if its untold resources are to be developed and its swelling numbers find profitable employment, we need and must have railway earnings sufficient for three things: First, a return on railway investments of such amount and so well assured as to attract and secure the necessary capital ——” etc.

THE SPEECH ITSELF

Having won the attention and aroused the interest of the audience in his introduction, the speaker comes to the body of his address, wherein he must not only maintain the attention but must satisfy the interest already aroused. All too many speakers raise intriguing subjects and angles of discussion in their

36 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

introductions and then blithely proceed to ignore them in the body of the talk. Just as they are on the point of saying something worthwhile or thought-provoking, something "reminds" them of some silly joke or banality and off they go. This breaks up the unity of the address and causes real mental effort on the part of the audience to pick up the thread of the talk once the speaker gets back on the track.

If your introduction has been good, your chances of holding the interest of your audience will be much better if you will present your facts or theories simply, concisely, coherently, good-naturedly, and without recourse to frills and tricks.

KEEP IT SHORT

Above all don't make your discussion too long. Don't try to cover the entire history of America in one after-dinner speech. Decide on one point you think will be of interest to your audience, and stick to it.

It is said of Mark Twain that he attended a social service meeting at which a worker so

feelingly and vividly described the unfortunate living conditions in the slums that Twain determined to give \$500 to the cause. As the speaker waxed more and more eloquent and more and more repetitious, Twain thought it over and decided that perhaps \$250 would be enough. On and on went the word artist and down and down went Twain's prospective contribution until the collection plate was passed and he took out ten cents.

UNITY

Aside from forceful introduction and conclusion, there are certain qualities necessary in every successful speech where the subject discussed is of a serious or semi-serious nature. These qualities may not all be present in one speech, but the three most important almost invariably are. And those three most important are unity, coherence and emphasis.

Unity is the art of sticking to the subject. Unity cannot be achieved by digressions into side-issues, reminiscences, anecdotes and jokes that do not illustrate the points to be brought out.

38 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

At a recent banquet of newspaper executives and workers a speaker propounded certain minor problems and difficulties of the Fourth Estate. He intimated he would suggest certain solutions for those problems. The rest of his speech, summarized, went something like this:

“We must look to the law for relief. But what relief can we expect from the law, with our Legislatures filled on the one hand with greedy, ignorant incompetents and on the other with lawyers more anxious to preserve the letter of an outworn legal tradition than to bring justice to a suffering world? It is a result of our heinous system of general enfranchisement, the system that brought about the direct election of senators, which every thinking person now admits to be a ghastly mistake, wasteful in money, wasteful in governmental efficiency, wasteful in potential service. Has the time come when only the man of wealth or with the backing of powerful, and in all too many cases, unscrupulous, interests, can attain high office in our land? Our forefathers fought and died for the principle of equal liberty for all. Have we come to the point where the only

man who can call himself free has the dollar sign branded on his forehead? I am told that under Mussolini Italy is clean, orderly, peaceful and efficient and I am not sure but that government by a dictator or by an oligarchy of men of intelligence and vision is the crying need of this country. It would destroy freedom, you say? But what is freedom? Is it ——? ” etc.

Quite a long way from the troubles besetting the newspapers and quite a long way from a unified speech.

It is most difficult for the inexperienced speaker to achieve unity in his address without thorough preparation and editing of his outline to make sure it contains nothing extraneous and that does not illustrate or amplify his theme. This is another reason why the novice should, if possible, eschew speaking extemporaneously. He is almost certain to wander hither and yon and leave the audience undecided as to what he is really talking about.

COHERENCE

A coherent speech is one that sticks together,

40 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

one in which each point follows the last one as cause and effect in logical order. In preparing his address the speaker must at all times have its purpose in mind and every argument, every statement, should lead up to that high point by natural steps. When the speaker raises a question or propounds a theory, in his next breath he must answer that question or explain the theory. To leave a line of thought hanging in the air while the speaker wanders off into realms not directly connected with it, although properly belonging in the address, is to confuse the audience as to the purpose of the talk and destroy its effectiveness.

In the following short excerpt from Woodrow Wilson's address on "The Issues of Reform" at the banquet of the Knife and Fork Club at Kansas City, notice how each statement logically follows the one preceding it and explains or illustrates a question that would naturally arise in a listener's mind.

"Let us ask ourselves very frankly what it is that needs to be corrected. (What is it?) To sum it all up in one sentence, it is the control of politics and of our life by great com-

binations of wealth. (Why? Is control by wealth so dangerous?) Men sometimes talk as if it were wealth we were afraid of, as if we were jealous of the accumulation of great fortunes. (Well, isn't it?) Nothing of the kind is true. America has not the slightest jealousy of the legitimate accumulation of wealth. (How do you know it hasn't?) Everybody knows that there are hundreds and thousands of men of large means and large economic power who have come by it all perfectly legitimately and in a way that deserves the thanks and admiration of the communities they have served and developed. (What are you talking about then?) But everybody knows also that some of the men who control the wealth and have built up the industry of the country seek to control politics and also to dominate the life of common men in a way in which no man should be permitted to dominate. (What way?) In the first place, there is the notorious operation of the bi-partisan political machine. (What do you mean by that?) I mean the machine which does not represent party principles of any kind but which is will-

42 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

ing to enter into any combination with whatever group of persons or of politicians, to control the offices of localities and of states and of the nation itself in order to maintain the power of those who direct it. (How is it able to do that?) This machine is supplied with its funds by the men who use it in order to protect themselves against legislation which they do not desire ——” etc.

EMPHASIS

This quality consists in giving points brought up in a speech their relative importance. This is accomplished as much by thoughtful preparation and outlining as by forceful delivery. A speaker may pound the table and wax oratorical but if he is doing it in the wrong place he is giving emphasis to the wrong things and confusing the audience as to what is important and what is not. Like as not it will miss the point entirely.

Likewise in the preparation of the talk so much space and time may be devoted to trivialities, illustrations and side issues that the

audience slides over the really vital parts without recognizing their importance.

In the excerpt from Woodrow Wilson's speech under the heading coherence, for instance, the speaker might have yielded to the temptation to elaborate his simple statement of fact that there are thousands of men who have come by their wealth legitimately and who are deserving of the nation's thanks for the services which they have rendered. He could have painted word pictures. He could have given illustrations and described such services to humanity in detail. But he didn't. And he didn't because that line of thought was of minor importance to the speech. And to do so would have sent a number of guests at that banquet home with the conviction that this country owes everything to its rich men—not the point of the address at all.

Emphasis is gained also by variation in sentence structure and length. As a rule statements deserving of emphasis are more effective when the sentences are short. Even one or two words, with pauses between them to allow the audience thoroughly to grasp the points to

44 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

be emphasized. Emphasized portions should also be expressed in the simplest phraseology so listeners will not have to parse the sentences mentally to grasp the full meaning.

Vivid illustrations familiar to the audience are also helpful in giving emphasis, as are questions propounded by the speaker and answered immediately.

Of course the greater part of emphasis depends upon a forceful and varied delivery. Modulations in voice and change of tempo are the most useful devices. When the more routine remarks are delivered in a conversational tone at ordinary conversational speed, lower or raise the voice where emphasis is called for. As a usual thing, slow, staccato sentences at low pitch, with frequent pauses, are more emphatic than loud, rapid-fire blasts which are inclined to affect a listener's emotions more than his head.

BEWARE OF GESTURES

Avoid the arm-waving, table-pounding gestures of the old-fashioned Fourth of July orator. And just as important, avoid the silly,

stilted wrist wavings and finger flutterings affected by so many beginners in elocution. The only purposes of gestures are to express the speaker's spontaneous feeling and to lend force and emphasis to statements that need emphasis. The simpler and less conspicuous they are the more likely they are to achieve their purpose. A gesture at the wrong place or one poorly timed is far worse than none at all and but distracts the audience's attention from what you are saying. Unless gestures come to you naturally as a spontaneous expression of your feeling, better shun them altogether.

In any case use them sparingly. Since their purpose is to emphasize, save them for the portions of your talk that need emphasis. When casually mentioning the sky it is not necessary to swing the arm upward in a swan's-neck swoop. The sky doesn't need emphasizing.

CHOICE OF WORDS

The wording of a speech can make or break it, can stamp its maker as well-informed, as an

46 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

ignoramus or as a priggish snob. One would hardly use the same words in addressing a labor union banquet as he would at a gathering of university professors, but certain general rules always hold good. Grammar and pronunciation should be as nearly perfect as possible. Many audiences would rightfully resent the use of such words as pusillanimous instead of cowardly, or recherche instead of exquisite, but no audience will object to your putting your words together and pronouncing them properly. By properly is meant the pronunciation in general use by ordinarily well educated Americans, not the affected "cawnts" and "deahs" of those who are more concerned with displaying their supposed superiority than in displaying sense.

SLANG

Slang is permissible if suited to the occasion, but only if it will more effectively illustrate or emphasize a point. To use slang simply to save yourself the bother of thinking up expressive and accepted words, marks one as a slovenly, mentally inert speaker, on the plat-

form or off. Under no circumstances should such cheap expressions as "guys," "swell," etc., be used.

GET NAMES RIGHT

Be sure of correct names and titles. Don't call him John Jones if his name is George Jones. A university professor, the head of a department, would be very apt to feel offended were he referred to as "a college teacher." Be sure also of your facts, dates and places. It is said of a formerly prominent statesman that he lost the governorship of a state because during the campaign he attended a banquet at a university and in his fulsome address congratulated the football team for its epochal victory that afternoon, but congratulated the wrong team.

THE CONCLUSION

While seemingly less formal and studied than the introduction, the conclusion is of almost equal importance to a speech, whether it is of a serious nature or not. Many shortcomings in the body of a speech can be atoned

48 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

for in a short, forceful conclusion. An audience best remembers the things it has heard last and those who have been lukewarm toward your talk will go home convinced it was a masterpiece if you can end it on a note of compelling interest, humor or surprise.

WHEN YOU STOP, STOP

Of course the main purpose of the conclusion is to enable the speaker to effect a graceful, natural leave-taking, without any thought as to improving or clinching his speech. How many speakers have you heard rambling on and on, becoming more and more self-conscious, their listeners becoming more and more restive, solely because they did not know how to stop. With the exception of the knowledge that he knows how to begin, nothing will give a speaker more confidence than the realization that, no matter what pitfalls he may encounter, he will always be able to stop without fidgeting, twisting the hands, stammering and finally blurting out, "Well, I guess that's about all."

BE READY

To this end, all conclusions, no matter what the type of address, should be as thoroughly prepared, memorized preferably, as the introduction. Then after it has been prepared, stick to it. Don't yield to the temptation to advance just one more thought. An audience senses when a speech is nearing its end and gives quickened interest and attention. Nothing will more certainly ruin an otherwise good speech than repeated fooling of the audience as to its conclusion.

BREVITY

To capitalize on the added audience attention toward the close of the address, the conclusion must be (1) brief, (2) forceful, and (3) appropriate to the body of the address which has preceded it.

Brevity is probably the most important quality. Do not plunge into an oration just to please your own ears. Do not repeat statements you have made previously.

FORCEFULNESS

Forcefulness is as necessary in the conclusion of an after-dinner speech as it is in the closing remarks of a lawyer to a jury. A climax is naturally expected and unless it is forthcoming the address will lack something.

This does not mean that arm-waving, oratorical methods are necessary. As on the stage, some of the most powerful lines are those delivered with the least show of emotion but with conviction and purpose in voice and face.

APPROPRIATENESS

To be appropriate a conclusion must be in keeping with the rest of the speech. If the body of the address has been informal and personal, to plunge into a formal or oratorical style for the conclusion would be ludicrous and destroy the effect built up.

THE PERSONAL CONCLUSION

This form is used when the preceding talk has been of that nature or planned solely to amuse. A graceful ending is perhaps more

necessary in a speech of this kind than in any other. "He who laughs last laughs best," and if the speech was intended to entertain, one good laugh or original twist at the end will make up for many earlier deficiencies. In conclusions of this kind the speaker may express his appreciation of having been asked to speak and extend his good wishes to the guests of honor, the organization sponsoring the function, etc.

FORMAL ADDRESS ENDING

If the address has been of a serious nature, it is unwise to adopt a humorous or too-personal conclusion. The audience will be all too apt to accept such remarks as the climax of the address. In talks intended to explain or instruct, a conclusion in the form of a brief summary is called for to round up and clinch the underlying thought of the address. Such a summary should not be so detailed or complete as one used in debate. It must not retrace every step taken during the discussion of the theme; this would result in repetition rather than conclusion. It should confine itself to

52 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

emphasizing the purpose of the talk and what the speaker tried to prove or show.

THE COMMANDING ENDING

This is the more emotional, oratorical, flowery form of delivery until recently common in all forms of address. It still has its useful place if used with restraint and in keeping with the spirit of the occasion. It is welcome in the conclusions of political and patriotic addresses and in those in which the speaker has tried to move the feelings of the audience and to arouse it to some definite course of action. The conclusion of Woodrow Wilson's Jackson Day dinner address at Washington illustrates how he attempted by restrained appeal to the emotions to persuade his auditors to adopt the theories and principles he enunciated in his address:

"The only thing that can ever make a free country is to keep a free and hopeful heart under every jacket in it, and then there will be an irrepressible vitality, then there will be an irrepressible ideal which will enable us to be Democrats of the sort that when we die we

shall look back and say: 'Yes, from time to time we differed with each other as to what ought to be done, but after all we followed the same vision, after all we worked slowly, stumbling through dark and doubtful passages onward to a common purpose and a common ideal.' Let us apologize to each other that we ever suspected or antagonized one another; let us join hands once more all around the great circle of community of counsel and of interest, which will show us at the last to have been indeed the friends of our country and the friends of mankind."

THE DELIVERY

And now comes the great night!

You have chosen a subject suitable to the occasion. You are well posted on it and have gathered ample material. You have arranged the material in proper form. You have rehearsed it to make sure that it sounds as well as it reads and so to impress it on your mind as to minimize the possibility of your going into a daze if a waiter drops a coffee cup be-

54 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

hind you. You have arrived at the banquet hall. Now what?

Forget all about it!

Of course that's impossible—for a beginner to forget for one minute that he has to make a speech. But he can at least forget—or try to—that it is a “speech.” He can forget all he's read of so-called rules and the technical end of it, if his preparation has been thorough. And most important of all, he can achieve a frame of mind in which he realizes he is not “making a speech” to a group of severe critics or ogres, but is TALKING to a group of friends, even if he doesn't know them all personally.

He can force himself to look upon it as conversation, exactly as if he had just returned from a world cruise and were entertaining the neighbors in his living room at home with his experiences. You wouldn't be a nervous wreck under such conditions, would you? Or shrivel up under an inferiority complex, even though there were a couple of strangers in the room? Why? Because you would know you had an ample fund of information of interest to the neighbors. Consider yourself in the same light

at the banquet table. You know you have something to say to interest or inform your friends, and they want to hear it. For what, after all, makes a good conversationalist but the ability to say interesting things in an interesting way? And that ability you have acquired by thorough preparation, and you KNOW it.

TALK to your friends, then, as you would talk to them in your own home on a subject with which you were more familiar than they. They wouldn't expect you to be perfect then, and they won't expect it of you on the platform. They would think none the less of you for hesitating or rummaging your mind for a suitable word or phrase in every-day conversation, and they will think none the less of you if you do so in a more formal talk. Indeed such hesitation will do much to win sympathy and to create that informal, conversational atmosphere which is desired in by far the larger number of speeches.

Another point that will lend self-confidence before the toastmaster's fatal words is the realization of the fact that a man's first speech is

56 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

quite apt to be as good as or better than subsequent ones he may make. He tries harder in his début, prepares more thoroughly, rehearses more humbly and painstakingly, and as a result is likely to cover himself with glory much as a rookie frequently scintillates in his first big league game.

This leads naturally to the advice not to let your initial success go to your head, give you the idea you are God's greatest gift to the rostrum and that you can slide through future addresses on your innate ability. You made a success of your first talk because you gave it intelligent thought, the only way you can make a real success of any speech, the first or hundred and first.

The theme and purpose of your address determines its style of delivery. In addresses of a serious nature, the bearing of the speaker must be appropriate, and the direct, informal, personal manner called for in most after-dinner speeches would not only be out of place but would destroy its effectiveness. Flippancy and familiarities in text and manner should be dispensed with.

But in all forms of after-dinner delivery there are certain necessary qualities. The speaker must have or must develop a definite speaking personality. The only way to accomplish this is to study other speakers and observe the traits in their deliveries which you consider winning and those that the speaker would do well to eliminate. Of course you are not to ape such mannerisms and methods in detail. To do so would destroy your naturalness and spontaneity and perhaps make yourself ridiculous to those who know you off the platform.

GENIALITY

This quality is of prime importance in the after-dinner speaker's delivery. This does not mean that he is continuously to giggle and guffaw or adopt a Pollyanna rôle. But he must be good-humored and pleasant to his fellow-diners and to his theme. How to express such geniality, each speaker must determine for himself. Do you have an infectious smile? Use it, when the text calls for it. Chuckles, elevation of the eyebrows, amusing

58 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

facial expressions and gestures, all can be used, with proper restraint, to express the good-will and friendship the speaker is supposed to feel. Of course, if you can bring yourself really to feel such friendship, instead of just pretending to, the problem of a pleasing delivery is half solved at the start.

Talk as if you enjoyed it and not as if it was a tedious task to be got through with as quickly as possible. Put zest and earnestness in your voice.

DIGNITY

Whatever the type of address, its delivery must be dignified. Stand erect. Do not assume grotesque postures. Speak distinctly and loud enough for everyone in the room to hear. Pronounce clearly and do not run your words together in an unintelligible blur. See to it that there is variety and enthusiasm in your voice and face.

STAGE FRIGHT

Most speakers, even those of long experience, suffer stage fright to some extent before

and at the start of a speech. Such nervousness at times results in a weak, fluttery voice, stammering, too fast or too slow diction and other horrors which seem much worse to the speaker himself than to his auditors.

To minimize the effects of such nervousness, relax every muscle in the body completely a few moments before you get to your feet. When the toastmaster rises to introduce you, let your arms, shoulders, legs, every part of your body, droop limply. Yawn a couple of times behind your napkin to relax throat and chest muscles. Get to your feet slowly and stand erect but not stiff. Throw back your shoulders. Take a deep breath, followed by a complete exhalation. This eases the strain on tense chest muscles, much of which is due to faulty exhalation on account of nervousness. Free the lungs from their accumulation of old air and the quality of voice will improve and you will be able to control it better.

Talk slowly, especially at first. Pause after the salutation for another deep breath and exhalation. Follow the same procedure all dur-

60 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

ing your speech if you feel your voice tightening up or running away from you.

Do not stare at the ceiling or the table while you are talking. Glance to all parts of the room, but early in your address pick out two or three persons in different parts of the room, persons you know and like or persons whose faces show a sympathetic interest in you and your subject. Thereafter address most of your words to them personally as if you were in your own living room at home.

THE TOASTMASTER

The toastmaster is, or should be, the most important part of the program and should be most carefully chosen. He can make a function a brilliant success or he can turn it into a dead, disgruntled, disinterested gathering. He must be more than a speaker; he must be a showman, in the better sense of the word. He must be able to sense the changing moods of a gathering and instil new life into one that is dying in front of him.

He must have consummate tact. He should avoid flippancies. He must have an original

sense of humor consisting of something over and beyond a collection of jokes and anecdotes. Nothing is more tiresome than to be forced to listen to a toastmaster who pops up periodically to reel off in a mechanical way a couple of jokes that only he imagines to have the slightest connection with the speaker to be introduced. If the toastmaster is not naturally humorous, he would do well to avoid humor altogether and confine himself to serious or formal introductions.

Above all, the toastmaster must realize that although he is in a sense the master of ceremonies, people do not go to the theatre to see the master of ceremonies. Brevity is more necessary in the toastmaster than in the speakers themselves. His opening remarks should not exceed five minutes at the most. They should be confined to pleasantries, generalities and explanations of the purpose of the function. For introductions following, not more than two minutes should be allotted each speaker to prevent the affair from dragging.

It is not the place of the toastmaster to discuss, except briefly and superficially, subjects

62 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

to be covered by the regular speakers. To have the toastmaster deliver the address one has laboriously prepared is disconcerting, to say the least.

SPEECH OUTLINES

As was said before, the following sample speeches are not to be delivered word for word as they appear here. And just changing a word here and there isn't enough either. They are really only outlines, although written in speech form in the hope that in that form they will be more useful in giving readers ideas of their own. The purpose is merely to suggest a means of approach to a subject and a method of handling it. It is probable, even desirable, that a reading of these speeches will suggest entirely different angles of a subject not touched upon in this book. It most certainly should suggest elaborations, illustrations, personal experiences and anecdotes which will give the speech individuality.

To attempt to give them much as they appear here is to risk humiliation at the hands of listeners who have heard the same talks delivered before by speakers more concerned

64 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

with saving time and mental energy than in preparing a good speech.

SHORT, HUMOROUS TALK FOR CHRISTMAS SEASON

To Be Delivered in Exaggerated, Oratorical Manner

Mr. Toastmaster—This is the season of the year when we dwell for a few brief days on the sublime heights of love, understanding and service. It is the season when life's true values are made apparent and when we perceive with the eyes of the spirit how Nature in her infinite wisdom has given to each of us according to his needs.

When snows fall and cold winds blow does she allow the birds to perish? No. Into their unthinking brains she implants the knowledge—instinct, if you will—that sends them on blithely to sing under sunny skies.

The timid and defenseless hare would die a thousand deaths had not all-seeing Nature come to its aid and given it legs to flee as the wind.

No great doctors or hospitals minister to the

wounded doe, but in her tongue is Nature's magic to cleanse and restore.

And she comes to the aid of mankind at this season, to lift a burden from perplexed minds and frayed nerves. She brings assurance to countless souls in doubt. She has furnished the answer to the problem for which untold millions of wives, mothers, sons, daughters have groped in vain. Gentlemen, as a Christmas toast I give you the thirty-nine cent necktie.

CHRISTMAS SPEECH FOR LODGE OR CLUB

Mr. Toastmaster—How many of you folks believe in Santa Claus? Hold up your hands. Come on now, hold up your hands. This is an uplifting talk, so uplift your hands. There's no sense in me standing up here doing all the work. You see, the next thing in my speech I have to point to the uplifted hands and say something about them. And I can't point to uplifted hands if there aren't any uplifted hands. You need the exercise anyway, after this dinner. There we are, that's nice. One—two—three, ah, a whole lot of hands. Now

watch me. See, I point to the hands and say, "All you people who put up your hands are crazy. You don't believe in Santa Claus. You only put up your hands to pamper me." Am I right? All who believe I'm right put up your hands. Thanks. Now you may put them down again. But why—and here I come to the serious part of the speech—why don't you believe in Santa Claus? What is Santa Claus but an unknown, unseen being who comes in the night to make people happy? You say he couldn't squeeze into a chimney. But he can squeeze into a telegraph wire or under the front door crack. You say he couldn't get down here from his home in the North Pole so quickly. But he can travel from New York to San Francisco in a second when he's in a hurry and in a few days if he's not pressed for time. You say he couldn't get all those things in his pack. But he can squeeze a ton of coal, a doctor for the baby and a wooden leg for old Cousin Ebenezer into a Western Union envelope. You say he's not strong enough to lift so many things. But he's strong enough to lift a mortgage from a widow's home and to lift a

load of care from a heart that wishes to God Christmas would never come. You say he couldn't do all that work himself. He doesn't. He must have helpers. In the North Pole they wear feathered caps and little red coats with brass buttons. Down here they wear derbies and blue serge coats with Rotary (Masonic, Odd Fellows, etc.) buttons. How many of you will be his helpers this year? A payment on the taxes, a receipted grocery bill or a month's rent may not make as pretty packages as candlesticks, butter dishes and bonbons, but then maybe you've never been behind in your rent. How many of you will be Santa Claus this year? And you needn't raise your hands.

NEW YEAR'S

As I look into your happy and intelligent faces I am reminded of the joke—but no, that's one of my New Year's resolutions, never again to allow myself to be reminded of jokes in after-dinner speeches. This is not only the beginning of the new year, but it is the end of the old. It is not only a time for looking forward, but it is a time for looking back. New

Year's! A word pregnant with meaning. What does it mean? Seriously—pardon me, that was a slip of the tongue: I'm not taking myself seriously this coming year. The years are but milestones of the future. As the bells toll out the death of the old year, Father Time inscribes on its tombstone the distance each one of us has traveled on the road of life—just forget that, will you? I'd firmly resolved to talk sense and not to mix my metaphors this year. But we all know whither we are headed. We know whether our destination is to be a cottage in the valley or a castle on the hill. And as we go home this zestful, invigorating night—there I go, talking about the weather already—let's stop a moment and see what is written on our milestones. Are we nearer the goal than we were this time last year or have we been sleeping under the trees? We can't scratch out what Time has engraved on our milestones. "The moving finger writes and"—ah me, there goes another resolution, not to recite poetry. There are so few milestones on our chosen roads, and yet we dally behind to dabble our toes in the mud when

just over the hill there is the rainbow. With the world's treasures at our feet, with opportunities for lives of richness and contentment at our very door, it fairly makes me sick—ignore that last remark, will you please? I'm fully determined not to talk about my ailments in public. As I say, it amazes me that we should go on grubbing for worms when we could be listening to the lark. Why can't our dreams come true? Why can't everyone be happy? And there goes my last resolution, not to ask riddles.

NEW YEAR'S

Well, I've done it! My New Year's resolutions, you know. I've resolved to be just as reprehensible, sinful and thoroughly vile as possible during the coming year. But temptations being what they are, I am very much afraid I won't be able to live up to my bad resolutions. In my resolutions I break many of the laws of God, man and the Patriotic Order of Sons of America. I make snoots at a lot of sacred things. For instance, I've resolved not to be a one hundred per cent. American.

I've resolved to let the country go to pot. I won't tell the President or even the Mayor how to run things any more. I won't even sign another petition against Sunday baseball, although it is so vicious and useless, with the opportunities for golf, motoring and bridge so widespread.

I've resolved to be a sluggard and I've furthermore resolved not to go to the ant about it. The ant would be so busy lugging home a piece of rubbish that he probably wouldn't have time to talk to me anyway.

I've resolved not to devote my life to glorious work and achievement, although right at this moment I know of a stock that can be bought on ten points margin and that is bound to go up as soon as a proposed merger is completed.

I've resolved not to dedicate my life to Service, although I know a number of persons on newspapers and am quite sure I could get my name and picture in the paper at least once a month.

I've resolved not to love my neighbor as myself. I won't frolic with him at his \$10,000 hunting lodge in the mountains and ride with

him in his new \$3,000 automobile. I won't drop in to see him, clap him on the back and call him a good fellow at his desk in City Hall, where he is an inspector of weights and measures at \$2,600 a year.

I'm going to do a lot of coveting this year. I'm going to covet a nose that will have a horror of finding itself in other people's business but which will turn up in disdain at crookedness. I'm going to covet eyes and ears that will see and hear real evil but which are blind and deaf to superficialities and hearsay. I'm going to covet a tongue that will be content to loll placidly in my mouth and watch the world go by without feeling called upon to tell it which way to go and which will become totally and painfully paralyzed the next time I am asked to deliver an after-dinner New Year's address and which will remain so until the last light in the banquet hall has been turned off.

LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

If Lincoln were alive today I wonder if he would carry three or four fountain pens in his breast pocket. I wonder if he'd have a lot of

72 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

little buttons and doodads on his coat, vest, watch chain and automobile radiator. I wonder if he'd know all about sales resistance and consumer appeal and whether he'd address luncheon clubs on SERVICE in the rail-splitting game. I wonder if he'd be a go-getter.

We all honor Lincoln today, from the man who runs the factory to the man who sweeps the floor. But what is it we honor in him? His ability to lay a cornerstone gracefully? His skill in getting his name in the papers? His ingenuity in discovering that a tooth paste prevents baldness, boils on the neck, carburetor trouble and train wrecks?

Or do we honor him because he was honest? Because he did each day's job as it came along the best he knew how, following the Golden Rule and without thought for himself and his own popularity and fortune?

It seems to me we honor him because he had ideals and the courage to live up to them; because he was sincere and lived according to the dictates of his conscience rather than the dictates of his constituents. Such traits of character led him from a log cabin to the White

House. They enabled him to carry burdens and face trials, disappointments and temptations few men have known. Such traits of character emblazoned his name on the pages of history and in the hearts of men forever.

And it seems to me that if such traits of character could accomplish all this, many of us who shout today of service and citizenship and who are trying to carve out for ourselves little niches in the Hall of Fame, might well adopt his methods. It seems to me we could take more thought on how much we could do **FOR** the world and less on how much we can do **for** the world. We could pay more attention to making things **WELL** and less to making things **SELL**. More time to high motives and less to high hat; more to fundamentals and less to gadgets. I think we would find that it pays to be, like Lincoln, a go-giver rather than a go-getter.

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

There ought to be a law. In fact I'm thinking of starting a movement, a crusade if you will, to prohibit the use of mistletoe on Christ-

74 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

mas and to make it compulsory on Valentine's Day.

A certain amount of kissing HAS to be done on Christmas anyway. Custom and tradition decree a dutiful peck for the heliotrope and green necktie and for the cigarette box given by Cousin Hannah which makes the cigarettes taste like perfume. But to increase the quantity and quality of Yuletide kissing by such an artificial stimulant as mistletoe seems to me unwise and to offer undue encouragement to persons with the necktie and perfumed cigarette box urge.

The prospect of bills also tends to rob the Christmas kiss of much of the gay abandon and sincerity which should accompany it.

Also the widespread use of particularly sticky candy introduces an element of distraction and wariness in Christmas kissing that is not in keeping with the spirit of the rite.

But on Valentine's Day! Ah! That is the time for good, serious, whole-souled kissing. Christmas bills have been paid: Or have they? There are good grounds for hope that the remaining two and a half tons of coal in the cellar

will last through the rest of the winter, a hope which as far as I have been able to find out, has never been realized. The income tax specialist has persuaded us that we're sitting pretty and that the dividends on our stock are actually losses.

My plan of compulsory Valentine's Day kissing would result in a greater spirit of national sincerity and would have a wholesome influence on the young. Under it a man who received an ardent valentine from a girl would have the legal right to dash over to her house with a sprig of mistletoe and cash in on the valentine's promises. If he doesn't know who sent it, he has the right to run around kissing people at random, trusting to the law of averages that he'll eventually kiss the right one.

It can be readily seen what a constructive effect this evidence of universal love and affection would have on the impressionable mind of youth. As it is now, all too many children are forced into a cynical way of thinking by observing an elder accept a burning valentine at its face value only to receive a good swift clout on the side of the face.

76 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

But the chief reason for adopting mistletoe as the symbol of Valentine's Day is that the —— (name of organization) is holding its banquets on this day and, well, look around you, boys, look around you.

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

I never cared so much for George Washington.

Oh, he was all right, of course. Nice gentleman and good soldier, but there have been a lot of nice gentlemen and good soldiers whom I'm sure I never could have learned to like any too well. I knew that he had much to do with winning the Revolutionary War, but that was his job and I didn't see anything in a military victory, noteworthy as it was, to cause me to love and honor the man who directed it—until I learned what a failure Washington was.

You don't think he was a failure? Oh, but he was, for quite a while. And I think that, like myself, you will come to love him as a man rather than respect him as a military genius if you can get the picture of that failure.

Picture him after his defeat in New York.

He wasn't a great soldier then. He admitted it and had been loath to take the command in Boston but a short while before. And now here he was, just as he had feared, beaten, driven back step by step through New Jersey, retreating ignominiously with criticisms and epithets hurled at him from all sides. Congress was looking at him askance and doing everything possible to hamper and discourage him. He was called weak, cowardly, incapable. His generals, muttering openly, were insubordinate and his men were deserting in whole companies. Jeers greeted the bedraggled stragglers in their miserable retreat and residents of the countryside through which they passed took the oath of allegiance to King George by the thousand.

And then he crossed the Delaware, he and his "army" of 3,000 woebegone, discontented men who were on the verge of deserting him, their leader, who was a failure. Picture him in his make-shift camp. Hostile eyes leering at him and hostile voices grumbling behind his back: "The big stiff, what right's he got to be a general?" "Where'd he learn the soldierin'

game, playin' tin soldiers?" "I'd like to take a poke at him just for luck."

That's where most of us would have quit and crawled home. That's what everybody wanted him to do. And that's just what he didn't do. Somehow he held those 3,000 men together and added 3,000 more. And then on Christmas Eve, 1776, the failure recrossed the Delaware in pitchy darkness and grinding ice. I always thought that picture of him standing so serious and dramatic in the bow of the boat was sort of funny. But not now. That's where he would want to be, standing up there alone with his thoughts. "Is this to be another fizzle? Am I going to fall down on the job again? What'll the folks back home think of me?"

There was still time to back out. But the boats grounded and through a sleeting storm the half-hearted men marched nine miles to Trenton—and defeated the Hessians!

Then what a change! The world acclaimed him. Soldiers went out of their way to do him honor and proclaim his genius. The wretched retreat was forgotten or regarded only as a tactical prelude to the masterful victory.

Rulers in Europe acclaimed him and overnight the failure became a genius.

I like that picture of him better than the ones showing him on prancing horses and wearing silken hose and powdered wigs. Just a discouraged, heart-sick man sitting by a dying camp fire, tempted to give up but rising finally to his feet to give the order to carry on.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

I'm only fifty per cent. competent to address a St. Patrick's Day gathering. For although I'm green, vividly so, as far as my knowledge of the subject goes, I'm also yellow, a deep, rich, orangy yellow, when it comes to the point of rising to my feet and actually talking about it.

When I was asked to say my few words tonight I replied, "Why sure, glad to." Later on I wasn't so sure that I was glad to. "Goodness gracious man," I said to myself, "you don't know anything at all about St. Patrick so how do you expect to talk about him?"

After which I bestirred myself to gather facts and figures which would enable me to do

him proper eulogy. But to my consternation I found that no one else knows very much about him either, although a vast number of legends concerning him have sprung up. I considered this something of a dilemma. Nothing at all as to his mother's maiden name, not a word as to the quality of his school work and his skill in sports. No information as to his choice of breakfast food or whether he was fond of animals. In fact none of those tremendously important items which modern Americans find so necessary in judging their great men. I don't even know whether he ever played cards or drank hard liquor.

The principal details that I could learn authentically in my very limited research were that he was brought to Ireland a prisoner when a young man; that he spent some years in jail, finally escaping to what was probably France; that while in jail he had been so impressed by the hopeless condition of his captors that he determined to devote his life to their spiritual, mental and physical uplift.

His efforts resulted in Christian altars and a new meaning to life throughout the length and

breadth of a land where once had been only pagan temples and degradation. But not a word as to his opinion on women's fashions or the way he liked his eggs cooked.

But then it occurred to me in one of my rare moments of what I like to call thought: For Heaven's sake, what more does anyone need to know about him? Isn't that the fitting way to achieve earthly immortality? How splendid it would be if when Death seals the lips of each of us here tonight it would at the same time seal up all memory of our little earthly foibles and faults, our little meannesses and spite, all the little details that don't really matter, and would allow us to go on living in the minds and hearts of men, maybe a year, maybe forever, as men and women who had done something beside just eat, breathe, sleep and squabble with one another. We can't all transform a race of crude pagans into a nation beautiful in mind and soul, but surely we can all do a little something to lighten man's burden here on earth.

And I for my part am starting right now, by cutting short what should be a joyous St.

Paddy's day talk before it becomes an out-and-out sermon.

MEMORIAL DAY

“ In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Beneath the crosses, row on row ——”

“ Under the sod and the dew
Waiting the judgment day;
Love and tears for the Blue
Tears and love for the Gray.”

And under great cities, on mountain tops, in wilderness and desert throughout the world lie the bones of other men, Washington's men, Napoleon's men, Cæsar's men, Charlemagne's men. No flowers for their graves. No flags mark their resting places. No guns salute their ashes. The world goes on above them, unknowing, uncaring. They are dead. Dead.

The custom of decorating the graves of those who died in battle is touching and proper. It is all the more beautiful and fitting when those whom we thus honor were our own friends and relatives. But can we not spare a few moments and a few thoughts for those others who

are just as much dead? For good or ill they did their bit to make the world we live in. From them we inherit much of the national hatreds and jealousies which torment us today. And to them we owe thanks for much of the freedom and ideals of justice and service which brighten our lives. They were brutal, they were merciful; they were grasping, they were generous; they were demons, they were saints. But they're all dead now.

Awful, isn't it? Perhaps a second Milton lies deep in the mud beneath us tonight, a rusted knife by his bones. Perhaps if his voice had not been stilled his songs would have beckoned us on a little further toward God. Perhaps these flowers before me sprang from the ashes of a Pasteur who had toiled, experimented, dreamed and was on the verge of bringing health and life to a sick world, when—poof, dead.

Who knows what the world would have been like today if these men had lived? Who knows what greater advances in civilized living would have been made if they had been allowed to develop their talents instead of sticking a

84 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

knife in their hands and forcing them to the level of the lowest clod? If they could accomplish so much with a sword to wipe out tyranny and bring richness to life, how much more could they not have accomplished with the gifts God gave them?

Let us silently thank them for what they did and sympathize with them, and with ourselves, that they were not permitted to do more. And let us silently pray that our sons, our friends, our neighbors and all who come after us will be allowed a more complete epitaph than "killed in action."

"Under the sod and the dew
Waiting the judgment day;
Love and tears for the Blue
Tears and love for the Gray."

INDEPENDENCE DAY

I imagine Washington, Jefferson and the rest must be getting a bit bored listening to us talk about them on the Fourth of July.

"Ye gods," can't you hear Adams say, "if I hear that 'Ring, Grandpa, ring for liberty' again I'll go ye nuts."

So I'm going to talk about Button Gwynnett. What? Never heard of Button Gwynnett? Just as I thought. The other day I met a man who said excitedly, "Congratulate me, I've just bought a Button autograph." "What did you just buy?" I asked smilingly. "A Button autograph. You know, Button. Just think of it." "Oh, yes," I said, "a button autograph. Ha, ha, ha, of course. Well, that's certainly very nice." Whereupon I sneaked away to whisper to friends that so and so was losing his mind.

But to my great surprise I found that there really was a Button, incomprehensible as it seems, that he was a signer of the Declaration—or just a signer, as we experts put it—and that his autograph is the most valuable of all the signers of the—that is, the signers, far more valuable even than Washington's.

Of all things, I said to myself, here is a man whose mere name on a piece of paper is worth thousands of dollars and I've never even heard of him. It doesn't seem right. Here he puts himself out to sign the Declaration, risks loss of life and property in the Revolution so

we can have a Harvard accent instead of an Oxford one, makes fortunes for autograph collectors in the twentieth century, and is getting very little credit for it all. I know what I'll do; I'll tell the folks at the —— (name of organization) banquet about him.

Once let the rising generation get the idea, I said to myself, that they run the risk of getting little or no publicity at patriotic celebrations in the Twenty-fourth Century and we can expect little help from them in future revolutions and signings.

So I think it only fair to give a little public, belated recognition to Button Gwynnett. He seems to have been born in England about 1732. He emigrated to Georgia and became a farmer on St. Catherine's Island. He was elected to Congress in 1776 and in 1777 became president of the provincial council, the highest station in Georgia, so it can be seen that he was a man of considerable prominence.

The last part of his life would perhaps not be such a good influence on the young, but in the interest of history I think it advisable to give it. It seems that Mr. Gwynnett was per-

haps a little too much imbued with the spirit of independence. First he was defeated for governor of Georgia. Well, that was all right. But then he was defeated for selection as brigadier general by General Lachlan McIntosh. I don't recall ever having run across that name Lachlan before. It just shows what mines of knowledge history and biography are. At any rate, he expressed his displeasure at this quite independently. Went off half cocked, is the way I express it. He organized a disastrous expedition against East Florida and then further showed his independence by fighting a duel with his successful rival, General McIntosh, in which both were wounded, Gwynnett fatally.

I don't know where he is buried, but let's drink a toast to an almost forgotten statesman and patriot, Button Gwynnett.

FOURTH OF JULY

It's too bad they cracked the Liberty Bell. For it wouldn't do us a bit of harm to ring it again. And I have an idea that the patriots who risked—and in many cases gave—their

lives and their fortunes to MAKE their country free would appreciate it if we'd talk less about freedom and do more to KEEP it free.

There aren't any Redcoats on our shores now, but we're in the red in more ways than one and it'll take more than the stroke of a pen and the clap of a bell to get us out of it. We need to stage another revolution—in our minds and consciences and souls this time.

We need to revolt against shoddy thinking that can't see beyond the ends of our own noses and the flaps of our own pocketbooks. We need to revolt against intolerance which sets up our own little beliefs and prejudices as the beacon lights by which all mankind must steer, like the American who was being shown through a famed old castle in Europe. "Now this," pointed out the guide, "is the moat." "You don't tell me," said the amazed American. "Now how in blazes could a person get a thing like that in his eye?"

We need to revolt against civic laziness and indifference which permits all kinds of political, economic and social traitors to run at large provided they don't stab us in the hip pocket.

We need to revolt against selfishness which puts rogues in high places and allows them to stay there as long as they clap us on the back and give us cigars on election day—and a contract now and then in between.

We're being taken for a ride by those four gangsters that have put so many nations on the spot—Greed, Graft, Gall and Gullibility. But on this Independence Day let's resolve to get out the old horse and play we're Paul Revere. And remember, when Paul went for a ride he did the driving.

LABOR DAY

My text for this evening is taken from verse nine of the "Psalm of Life" by Longfellow.

"Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait."

It seems to me, my dear friends, that that verse, especially the last line, is particularly appropriate to Labor Day and to those who labor. "Learn to labor—and to wait."

The question naturally arises in our minds: What are we to wait for? Our pay? More than likely. Wait for the boss to come back from his golf game to tell us whether we have a job tomorrow? I wouldn't be a bit surprised. Wait for the timekeeper to stop talking to his girl on the telephone so we can go home? There's more than a grain of truth in it.

But what was the really BIG thought in the poet's mind when he told us to work and then wait? I haven't the slightest idea, but I know what is in mine: That after we've done our work we'd better learn to sit around and wait until people give us credit for it. Learn to wait until the world realizes that the man who plowed the furrow is the man who raised the wheat. It occurs to me that one doesn't plant wheat in furrows. But just let it pass. Make it rutabagas.

We must learn to wait until parents send their boys to college to learn to water horses and not to water stock. Of course technically speaking horses are stock, but it doesn't pay to be too finicky about such details. We must learn to wait until society gives more credit to

the man who pushes a wheelbarrow than to the man who pulls a leg and more respect to the man who can fix a kettle than to the one who can fix a cop.

On the other hand, you remember that our lesson for the day admonishes us to labor FIRST, then to wait. The fellow whose laboring consists in watching the clock creep around to five P. M. and who then waits for the board of directors to come around and make him a vice president might as well put in a standing order for air cushions to make his waiting more comfortable.

The chap who spends his time waiting for the foreman to turn his back so he can sneak out on the fire escape and have a smoke will wait a long time before the president invites him up to the house to meet his daughter.

The man who puts in his evenings waiting to fill an inside straight isn't going to find photographers waiting on his doorstep to take his picture for the paper.

So on this glorious Labor Day let us all resolve to labor the best we know how and

then wait to see what happens. Probably the boss will give your job to his brother-in-law.

LABOR DAY

There's a lot of bunk about Labor Day. That is, there's a lot of bunk about the speeches batter-headed chappies who know little about laboring deliver on Labor Day.

Toil is noble, they smirk. Labor is divine; it is Nature's plan. The man who swings any kind of heavy instrument from dawn to dusk and whose brow is always wet with honest sweat, is to be envied, they chortle. Phooey, all phooey. The heaviest instruments persons who talk like that swing are niblicks and curling irons. That kind of talk was all right in the days when there weren't enough of life's comforts and necessities to go around and people had to kid themselves and each other to keep up steam. But today, when there are more than enough good things for everybody, we need a truer philosophy of labor.

Work isn't noble unless it leads to something noble—a life of fullness and richness for the worker, his loved ones or society. In which

case it is service, not labor. If it leads to furrows in the brow, kinks in the back, aches in the heart and general pain in the neck, it is labor and nothing more. There's nothing noble or divine about work that turns the sunrise into a factory whistle and the sunset into a time clock.

The copy-book boys are fond of saying that good hard work is Nature's physician, that it brings surcease to sorrowing hearts and enables one to forget. So does a sniff of opium or a good swift crack on the head, but that isn't saying they're good. The best medical thought doesn't advise chopping off your arm to make you forget a toothache. But even if good old back-breaking toil does help us forget some things, it keeps us from doing a lot more things we'd be glad to remember.

But work is Nature's law, say the moralists. It's true that under the present scheme of things birds, squirrels, South African ant-eaters and almost all living things must do a certain amount of hustling if they would eat. But there's no proof whatever that they enjoy it. No bird would fall for that "work for work's

sake" line. You never saw one turn down the chance to sit up on a fence post and take a sun bath if his stomach was full.

The man who labors is a happy man, say the swivel chair toilers. But it seems to me it's always the chauffeur who changes the flat tire on an August day. If any of them wants to make himself real good and happy I have a cellar that needs cleaning out and a roof that needs fixing.

Man should work to live, not live to work. We have only so much time here on earth and the more laboring we do the less living we do. This should be a day when we revile labor, not praise it. When we seek by all means at our command, science, organization, machinery, economics, to make this world sweeter rather than sweatier.

ARMISTICE DAY

Speech to Be Delivered at a Veterans' Banquet

Armistice Day is really no time for an after-dinner speech. An after-dinner speech is supposed to be humorous, entertaining. But there's nothing humorous about the fellows

who are pushing up poppies in Flanders fields and there's nothing entertaining about the ones who are pushing themselves around in wheel chairs in veterans' hospitals.

We need a new note in Armistice Day exercises today. We need more observance and less celebration; more memory and less revelry. Oh, it was all right just after the war, the whooping and shouting and dancing. Man is a selfish creature. We'd come through alive. Why shouldn't we dance? We'd have been fools not to.

But the barbed wire is all down now. The shell holes have been filled in. New trees are growing—and you and I are getting old, too old to fight any more. In the next war we'll be selling corn willie to the government and the fighting will be done by somebody else. And who will do it? Have you a son? You? And you? They'll do it. They'll be marched off somewhere in the night without a chance for good-bye, and you and I will stay home to dread the mail man's knock.

Oh, it's all very well to sing "Mademoiselle from Armentieres" and chuckle over the

"promenade avec mois" we had. It's Nature's way—to paint a rainbow in the sky to make us forget the storm. But today, Armistice Day, when we're fat at forty and our sons are fit for cannon fodder, let's play a joke on Nature and REMEMBER: Remember that wine wasn't the only thing red in France and that ten francs weren't the only things shot.

If we could risk our LIVES in a war to end war, surely we can risk our tongues, our hearts, our votes, to keep our sons from learning that that long, long trail we sing about is very long, very muddy and very cold.

THANKSGIVING

Well, I suppose you're all appropriately thankful for this and that. But you have one thing to be thankful for that you haven't counted on—I'm not going to tell you what you have to be thankful for. You don't even have to be thankful at all if you don't want to be. And if I know anything about Thanksgiving speeches, that's something of a record.

You know it always irks me exceedingly to have some jolly, well-fed fellow heave himself

to his feet and pompously enumerate all the things for which I ought to be thankful. It seems to me that we who subscribe to the doctrine of free will and freedom of choice should at least allow each other the privilege of choosing the things we want to be thankful about. You notice I say WANT rather than ought or should. For these community thankfulness pickers almost invariably pick the wrong things as far as I am concerned. They tell me I ought to be thankful for the nice turkey, plum pudding, mince pie and, as the poets say, all the fixin's. But people who tell me that have never seen an X-ray picture of my insides.

They tell me I should be thankful for the sunrise. Yet on every thankful list I've ever drawn up the sunrise has been way down toward the tail end. The only way I can be thankful about the sunrise is in that I don't have to get up that early. Maybe you've never had a female relative in your home who catapults herself into your room at 5 A. M. to boom, "Wake up, you sleepy head, you simply MUST get up to see this per-fect-ly glor-ious sunrise."

If you haven't, that's something else you have to be thankful for.

One advantage of my plan of giving thanks by inclination rather than by tradition and duty is that it eliminates a lot of hypocrisy and finger-crossing. Under my plan, for instance, a man would be allowed to be thankful that he hadn't anything MORE than appendicitis while at the same time his doctor could be frankly and openly thankful that he hadn't anything LESS. This would lead to a far greater amount of thankfulness and appreciation of our blessings, for I find it's very easy to be thankful even for the toothache, when it's in the other fellow's head.

One of the most popular subjects for compulsory thanksgiving is the opportunity for higher education open to everybody in our great land. If one should fail to give thanks for this blessing when it is touched upon by a Thanksgiving orator, one is branded as something or other. But under my plan school teachers, publishers of text books and janitors could properly give thanks for the opportunity for higher education open to the masses. On

the other hand the fellow who graduated from college two years ago last June and who has been selling brushes from door to door since then, could with perfect propriety give thanks that he still has two weeks' service left in the soles of his shoes.

Under my plan some of you may be thankful for this very helpful and inspiring talk. Others may be thankful that I've decided to quit at last. In which case, thanks a lot.

HUMOROUS SPEECH FOR A BEGINNER

It has been said that only one out of 1,000 persons can make an after-dinner speech. And that's all right. But the other 999 think they can, and that's not so good. And every time they open their mouths they subtract that much from the sum total of human knowledge. You know the difference between a turkey and an after-dinner speaker? A turkey isn't stuffed with chestnuts until he's dead.

Take myself, for instance. When I sat down here nobody but God and I knew what I was going to say. And now only God knows. I hope I'm not getting like the absent-minded

100 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

professor who hid himself under the bureau and waited for his collar button to come and find him. Or like the second absent-minded professor who, when the doctor in the hospital said "It's a boy," replied "What is?" Or like the third absent-minded professor who kissed the door and slammed his wife, or like the youngest brother of the three absent-minded professors just quoted, himself an absent-minded professor. When the dentist asked him if he wanted gas he said, "Yes, about five gallons, and while you're about it you might as well look at my oil."

That's the trouble with the people of today. They don't know what they're talking about. We're like the two cultured gentlemen who were discussing a friend who had just returned from Europe. "What do you think," said one, "he picked up a Rembrandt and a Whistler while he was away." "What's he gonna do with 'em?" asked the other. "He's already got a Buick and a Chevrolet."

You see what I mean. We use words to cover up our real thoughts. Like the fellow who wrote to his girl. "Dearest Betty," he

wrote, "I would swim the mighty ocean for one glance from your dear eyes; I would walk through a wall of flame for one touch of your tiny hands; I would leap the widest stream in the world for one word from your ruby lips. As always, your Frank. P. S.—I'll be over tomorrow night if my toothache is better."

Which by logical and easy stages brings us to the subject of my speech. And which by a strange coincidence brings me to the end of my allotted three minutes.

.

SPEECHES FOR SOCIAL OCCASIONS

THE WEDDING DINNER

By a Guest

I FEEL myself on the verge of giving a friendly word. I've got to get something out of this affair. The bridegroom (give names) gets the bride; the bride gets a case of nervous prostration and the least I should get is credit for making the marriage a success.

You've heard, at least I hope you haven't, of the homely Scot in London who had been shown the sights and was given lunches and dinners at the best hotels. To his friend he said: "This is all very well, but what I want is something more homely, homely surroundings, simple food and the friendly word." He was taken to a quiet little place on a side street for tea with bacon and eggs. "This is exactly what I want," he said to the waitress. "Homely surroundings, simple food; but what about the friendly word?" The waitress whispered in his ear: "Don't eat the eggs."

And my friendly word to you two people to-night is: Don't listen to any friendly words as to how to run your lives. Don't ask for advice from well-meaning but addle-pated friends and relatives. For that matter you won't have to ASK for it. You'll find advice-givers sitting on the front steps with the milk waiting for you in the morning. They'll pop out at you from behind curtains. All you have to do is wrinkle up your brows and murmur, "I wonder what ——" and they're off. You'll be off too if you listen to them. It doesn't make a bit of difference what you're wondering about, the red-headed widow in the house next door or the dog's health. Of course you understand, ——, (name of bridegroom) that that word dog is to be taken literally. Whatever it is, they are invariably wrong concerning that particular widow and that particular dog.

I advise you to adopt the only safe course when such circumstances arise: Give me a ring. I'll be glad to give you a little, er, that is, talk it over with you frankly. I'm usually free at dinner time and I've found that my brain

104 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

works best on steak, reasonably thick and not too well done.

RESPONSE BY THE BRIDE

I hope —— (name of bridegroom) has been listening attentively to all these nice things that have been said about me. I sort of wish I had a stenographer here to take them down and type them on imperishable paper. Then when the steak inconsiderately burns itself up I could pin my paper on the kitchen wall and say: "Pish tush, none of that talk. Look who I AM! That's what THEY think about me!"

But seriously, thanks so much for everything; for your gifts that will be continual reminders of you. But more, for your friendship and encouragement. And remember, we're not moving to Alaska. The latch string will be always out. But maybe you'd better cultivate a taste for salmon. Even if I am so nice, you know how steaks are.

RESPONSE BY BRIDEGROOM

I don't think it's right to expect me to make

a speech. Getting married is certainly enough accomplishment for any man in one day. In the first place I'm a married man now and a married man is supposed to be a man of few words. In the second place I've heard so many nice things here tonight that I've really built up quite a good opinion of myself. I think it's unfair to make me deflate myself so soon by making a speech. You're just asking me to give myself away, like Rastus Brown who was tried for the theft of a hog.

"You are acquitted, Rastus," the judge told him at the end of the trial. Rastus looked puzzled. "Acquitted, Jedge?" he asked. "Yes, acquitted," said the judge. "Well," said Rastus, "does that mean I got to give the hog back?"

I'll be deflated soon enough anyway—when the first screen door needs to be hung and the first clinker removed from the furnace. By the way, are any of you folks posted on screen doors and clinkers? Remember, we want to see a lot of our friends in the days just ahead of us.

STAG DINNER TO A BRIDEGROOM

By a Friend

I was sorely puzzled to decide what to say tonight. I experienced so many varying moods. One minute I felt hurt that George here could be so faithless to us, and was tempted to ignore him coolly. Another, I was disappointed in him. I thought he was made of sterner stuff and would not weakly fold up and surrender his will-power and good judgment as do those who are made of common clay. Then I felt magnanimous and dallied with the thought of congratulating him for his cleverness as a picker, but I recalled the one in which a wife asked her husband if he thought that clever men make good husbands and in which the man replied, "My dear, clever men do not become husbands." I even thought of giving him a few words that might prove useful in his changed life, but then I remembered the man who met another on the street and said: "I am a man of few words." "Shake," said the other, "I'm married too."

I finally decided to compromise by drinking

a poker toast to our wayward brother just for old time's sake and in the hope that even at this late date it might bring tears to his eyes and cause him to stop, look and listen before it is too late.

So George, here's hoping that on your great adventure the PAIR of you will find the road to happiness STRAIGHT; that when at last you have a FULL HOUSE of THREE OF A KIND you won't be so FLUSHED with success that you can't OPEN up your HEARTS and DRAW a chicken out of the POT for old friends who CALL to RAISE the DEUCE for old time's sake; and that when we do SEE YOU your "AUNTIES" won't STAY IN to PASS at us with CLUBS.

THE ENGAGEMENT

By a Guest

You know, engagements always affect me. I'm always deeply touched at the sight of a young and innocent couple embarking hand in hand on the sea of life. I've even been known to weep. It always reminds me of that dear poem:

108 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

“Under the spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith a mighty man is he
With large and sinewy hands.”

Could anything express it more beautifully?
Look about you everywhere, on the mountains,
in the valleys, in the cities, in the fields. What
do you see? Horrible, isn't it? And when I
contemplate it I am tempted to say with the
poet:

“I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.”

For what is life? Some say this, some say
that. Some say that it is neither this nor that
but is indefinable, much as if one were to hold
a mirror up to nature and ask it to solve our
problems for us. I don't think it can be better
expressed than in the lines which have come
to mean so much to me:

“For men may come and men may go
But I go on forever.”

And I think that I ought to go on forever in

the pages of history as the first man in the world to make an engagement dinner speech without giving a lot of fool advice, saying absolutely nothing except good luck and lots of it.

THE ENGAGEMENT

By a Guest

I can't find words to tell you folks how happy this occasion makes me. When I hear that a friend of mine has become engaged it peeps me up, gives me a new interest in life. I wish all my friends would become engaged and married, a lot of times. To me it means more than old shoes, rice and silver candlesticks. It means something personal to me, something close to my heart: A chance to give advice without being interrupted or pooh-hooed.

When somebody I know gets himself engaged or married is about the only time I get that opportunity. You can't very well invite a person to make a speech at an engagement dinner and then throw things at him because he says what he wants to say. Of course I've been known to make speeches without being asked,

110 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

but that's neither here nor there. The point is that to me it's a pretty flat engagement or wedding when I can't tell the parties concerned how to go about making their venture a success.

After much study I've codified my matrimonial advice, as it were, into six simple rules, three for the man and three for the woman. For the man my first rule is: Don't open cans of hot baked beans without holding a dishrag over the opener as the juice frequently spurts out and inflicts painful burns.

Secondly, don't put cigarette and cigar stubs in coffee cups. You'll just find them in your dish water later and you'll be that much longer getting to your evening paper if you have to keep emptying and filling your dishpan all the time.

Thirdly, don't carry monkey wrenches and other bulky objects in your hip pockets. You'll find that while sitting on the outside ledge washing the windows that such bulky objects tend to work out of the pocket and if there is a child or dog playing below the result is apt to be unfortunate.

For the woman my rules are even more useful. First, keep all ash trays under the laundry tubs in the cellar. If you have trays placed at convenient spots throughout the house you will find burning cigar and cigarette stubs on rugs, highly polished surfaces and window sills. Whereas if a husband does not *SEE* a tray he will carry a cigarette stub about with him for hours until he finds a tray to throw it toward.

Secondly, have no screen doors. You will find that wire mesh wears out and that it invariably wears out in the golfing, fishing, hunting or sleeping season.

Third, have boiled parsnips for dinner every night. Bring them to the table first, before the other dishes. Then when your husband has glared and muttered at them to the point of exhaustion they may be removed and the other dishes brought in with reasonable safety.

RESPONSE BY THE GIRL

Thanks, thanks so much for everything. For your darling gifts, but most of all for your thoughtfulness and encouragement. I love every one of you. That's the fine thing about

112 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

being in love—you want to share it with everybody. (Shaking finger at fiancé.) But don't let me catch you saying anything like that.

Now I suppose you want to know all about it; when we became engaged, where, and what ——— (name of fiancé) said. Well, we were on the top of the Empire State building on the Fourth of July. I'll never forget it. The cool, caressing breezes—sun glistening on rivers and bay—the muffled voice of the city far below. It was like living in a dream land. We were peering down over the parapet. Suddenly ——— (name of fiancé) said: "I wonder what it'd feel like to fall off here?" I said: "Try it and see." That's all there was to it. There we were, engaged.

RESPONSE BY FIANCÉ

I feel like the fellow who's asked to eat a hearty breakfast just before he's to be executed. He can't enjoy the ham and eggs for the hanging. And I haven't been able properly to enjoy being engaged because I felt in my bones I'd have to make this speech.

However, I have made sufficient study of the

matter to be able to speak from experience and give a little sound advice. And my advice to you fellows is: Don't get engaged. It just stands to reason by the law of averages that you couldn't possibly have the luck I have. And my advice to you girls is the same: Don't get engaged. You'll go a long way to find another fellow like me, one with my good judgment, keen discrimination, dauntless courage and stubborn will that enabled me to achieve my goal despite barriers that would have discouraged weaker hearts.

And finally I say to all of you, don't get engaged, because it just doesn't seem possible that anybody else could have so many good, loyal, loving friends to come around and make a fellow feel as if he owned the world and was sitting on top of it.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

By a Guest

The guests of honor haven't disappeared since I've been clearing my throat, have they? You know it's always a good thing these days to make sure the loving husband and wife are

114 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

present and speaking to each other before congratulating them on having successfully passed another milestone on life's highway, if you'll forgive the poetic trend. That expression comes from a speech I had prepared for a surprise celebration a number of us planned for friends on their anniversary several years ago. We went to their home in a body, to find a "for rent" sign on the door. She had gone back to mother while I was writing my speech. With the exception of the milestone on life's highway excerpt, it is still as good as new.

Well, so much for that. Now to get down to good old ——— (name of husband) and ——— (name of wife). A little fatter, a little prettier, a lot nicer. If ——— (name of husband) would only learn to keep his eye on the ball and stop that disgusting slicing, and if ——— (name of wife) could only bring herself to pass instead of bidding four no trump—when she is my partner, that is—I would say that they had achieved that perfection in living which we prophesied for them on their wedding day. As it is I'm afraid we'll have to wait for one of the many other

anniversaries I am planning to attend with increasing happiness, with increasingly heartfelt congratulations to them for their success and with increasingly proud congratulations to myself in that I may call myself their friend.

MOTHER'S DAY

By a Guest

This is a funny country. I guess it's almost as funny as other countries. But I don't believe other countries can even remotely approach our funniness in regard to our addiction to buttons, emblems, flags and all kinds of gewgaws and whatnots to let our neighbor and his wife in on what we're thinking, doing, believing and feeling. We can't be a good Rotarian, Democrat or member of the pants pressers' union without wearing a button.

If it were confined to buttons it wouldn't be so bad, but no good American would think of letting a little twenty-five cent button—even a diamond-encrusted one—speak for him. Oh my no. He's got to speak for himself, loud and long. Hence Mother's Day, conceived of a beautiful thought and noble motive, de-

generated into just another good old American "day" with the good old American spirit. The only difference between this "day" and any other "day" is that on Mother's Day we wear imitation carnations and talk. On other days we just talk. As long as we wear some kind of dooflicker on our coats and spout forth a few fine phrases about Motherhood, service and sacrifice, we're doing our duty and our mothers should feel highly honored. Why should they think of a nice new dress or a trip to the movies when they can be called the noblest work of God!

A tremendous number of people who proudly burst forth with carnations and pretty words about Mother should be prevented from doing so—by the law of good taste. If the purpose of the day is to furnish mothers with a little innocent amusement, it is accomplishing its purpose admirably, for I imagine there is a lot of laughing up the sleeve going on today. I'd like to be a mother—for five minutes, say—and see a lazy oaf son of mine strut up the street with a five-cent fake carnation in his button-hole and give me a toast over a stein of beer

in the pool room, when he doesn't know I exist the other 364 days of the year except when his stomach's empty.

I'd like to see everybody at this banquet chuck away his white carnation and agree not to SAY another word about mother but to hustle home and DO something FOR her. But on second thought, perhaps you'd better not. I wouldn't have anything to talk about next Mother's Day.

RESPONSE BY A MOTHER

I feel greatly honored at being chosen to respond to all the heart-warming things said here tonight on behalf of the mothers of the nation—at least of the 22nd voting precinct. But I don't think it's so very nice to make me speak at all, to make any mother speak, for that matter. This is MY day, OUR day, and there's just one way we can enjoy it; let us sit here quietly and listen and listen and listen. That is what all mothers want, but they don't want to listen to me. They want to listen to sons and daughters, grandsons, granddaughters. For you know, mothers get paid in solid gold

118 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

but the paymaster doesn't always come so regularly. Sometimes he's off at the ends of the earth, sometimes he has newer employees to look after, sometimes he just forgets. But when he does come, as he has tonight, we want every bit of our pay—every smile, every kind word, every friendly touch of the hand. Maybe that kind of currency doesn't pay the rent but it pays in satisfaction and contentment. Thieves and stock markets can't take it away from us and we can hoard it to our heart's content.

GOLDEN WEDDING

By a Guest

Fifty years ago! Think of it. Fifty short years ago today a girl and a boy stood hand in hand before the altar and promised to love and honor each other until death did them part. I wish they'd leave out the promise part of it and just say, "I hereby take thee, Mary Smith, to be my wife." As it is now those who scoff at marriage can say, when a couple reaches this pinnacle of life together, "Aw, they just did it because they promised."

I wish all who say that could know our beloved friends here. It would prove beyond doubt that promises ARE empty but that marriage entered into with sincerity and fostered with frankness, courage and mutual consideration is REAL and is the foundation of most of the pleasures, emotions, hopes and achievements that give life its beauty and meaning.

I wonder what you two dreamed about fifty years ago today? Of course —— (name of husband) was going to be a great, great man, President probably, at least a Senator, with the world looking up at him in awe and reporters waiting in his reception room with bated breath to catch the gems of wisdom as they dribbled from his lips. That's what we were all going to be—fifty years ago.

And —— (name of wife) here; she was going to live in a magnificent mansion on a hill, with butlers and pages flitting in and out and Presidents and kings dropping in for luncheon. We were all going to live in mansions on a hill—fifty years ago.

But we all soon or later find out, as our dear

120 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

friends here undoubtedly have found, that mansions on a hill are mostly empty, bleak, lonely piles of stone and wood that crumble and decay, but that the mansion which they have been building for fifty years is fashioned of materials which money cannot buy. It is made of stones of loving companionship more enduring than granite and is cemented with trust and understanding more lasting than bands of steel.

We who love you have watched you build your mansion painstakingly year by year. We have been inspired by it. We have rejoiced in that from time to time we were permitted to be guests therein. And we confidently hope and expect that you will have added many more rooms before the great Architect at last calls it completed.

RESPONSE BY HUSBAND OR WIFE

I don't know just what to say. There are so many thoughts in my mind, but I'm afraid some of the thoughts aren't worthy of the magnificent being you have so flatteringly made me out to be. For instance, I am

tempted to be spiteful and say, "I told you so; you thought we couldn't do it, eh?" But a person who is celebrating his golden wedding is supposed to be above such grossly human thoughts, so I put it aside.

Again I am tempted to brag and in a way look down on you people because you haven't had the advantages I have had—fifty years of happiness and lovable companionship with my wife and fifty years of loving friendship with you.

I am tempted to call in the reporters and tell how I did it; how I skillfully blended sacrifice and service, worry and work, cares and caresses, to make myself what I am today. But on second thought I find that I do not have the recipe—that I never knew it. I keep all such things in my wife's name.

Perhaps I'd better just say thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, for honoring us to-night with your gifts and with your company, for honoring us in the past, and I trust in the future, with your friendship. May God bless you as He has blessed us.

122 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

BIRTHDAY

By a Guest

I don't know that I approve of this habit of giving people birthday dinners. It's apt to give the guest of honor a swelled head, it seems to me. It doesn't stand to reason that it does a person any good to sit here and hear himself called the quintessence of sagacity, perspicacity and pertinacity. It's likely to give him the birthday habit and tempt him to ring in an extra one now and then, like the office boy who asked for the afternoon off to attend his grandmother's funeral. "But you just had an afternoon off last week to attend your grandmother's funeral," said the boss. "I know it," said the boy, "and would you believe it, we almost buried her alive that day."

So instead of telling ——— (name of guest of honor) here what a great chap he is and run the risk of weakening his moral fibre, I'm going to do him some good and tell him in what slight degree he differs from the apes and other lower forms of animal life.

(Here discuss several trifling, commonly

known peculiarities or mannerisms of the guest of honor that couldn't possibly give offense.)

Outside of that, he's a pretty good fellow. Not too good, you understand, but good enough for me to be proud to call myself his friend and to wish him happiness.

WELCOME TO A DISTINGUISHED GUEST

I assume our distinguished guest knows when and where he was born and how he struggled upward against obstacles to blaze his name in the commercial world, finally to achieve his life's ambition—an invitation to address the Civic Club of ———. In most welcoming addresses half the time is given to telling the distinguished guest intimate details of his life that everybody, most certainly the distinguished guest, knows about already. The other half is taken up by the speaker talking about himself.

But I think I ought to talk about OURSELVES if you, Mr. ———, are really to know us, like us and enjoy your visit with us as much as we enjoy having you.

(Here give a few humorous references to the

124 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

town, if it is a small one and the distinguished guest is visiting it for the first time. If a city, a few humorous references may be made to members of the organization sponsoring the dinner. For example:)

For instance, Mr. ———, did you know that our train service is the envy of even larger communities; that we have 17 southbound trains and 18 northbound daily and that the last train from the city is in ample time to catch the after-theater crowds? I wager you didn't know that, and yet it is little facts like that that make life worth while.

Again, did you know that our water is far beyond the standard of purity set by the state board of health and that it is obtained from artesian wells conveniently placed so as to assure a constant flow to all parts of town? A lot of people don't know that, and yet how much it would add to their pleasure.

Then too, we have a champion living in town. Will Charlie Adams please stand up? Where is Charlie Adams? Ah, there he is. There, Mr. ———, is the champion zither player of ——— county. Do you know any-

thing about the zither, Mr. ———? No? Now you see how my plan is getting us together? Right away you and Charlie Adams discover that you have something in common.

I mention these little points, Mr. ———, so you won't be like the young millionaire who went up to a movie star in Reno and said: "I wonder if you remember me?" The star looked at him blankly. "Two years ago in Paris," he went on, "I asked you to marry me." "Ah," she said, "and did I?"

For we hope that we can make your stay with us so pleasant that two or twenty-two years from now, when somebody mentions ——— (name of town or organization) you will not have to say: "Ah, was I ever there?"

FAREWELL DINNER

By a Guest

Of all the blessings of civilization I think travel should be near the top of the list. Nothing else enables us to get rid of our friends, relatives and neighbors so effectively. And unless we do get rid of them for a while now and then we're too apt to take them as a

126 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

matter of course and not love and appreciate them as we should.

Take ——— (name of guest or guests of honor) here, for example. For years we've been watching them go about their homely tasks, Mary putting the wash out, John putting the cat out, without thinking much about it one way or another. But before they're out of New York harbor we'll be perverse enough to miss the cat, miss the wash and miss the cheerful greetings and gay smiles which brightened the neighborhood and which we took for granted as our rights.

But now that the gay smiles and cheerful greetings are to be wasted on a lot of musty museums and cathedrals in Europe, we're just selfish enough to wish you a grudging bon voyage and a fervent "hurry back home."

JOSHING WELCOME TO A RETURNED TRAVELER

By a Lodge Brother, Neighbor or Friend

You know the fine thing about a European vacation is that it is practically three times as long as it actually is. There's a month thinking about it, a month spending it and a month

talking about it. And so, George, we welcome you back to enjoy the best part of your vacation.

But we're ready for you. We've been taking our orange juice, cod liver oil and other vitamin-containing foods to build up a reserve force capable of resisting even the most violent attacks of cathedrals and cabarets, ruined castles and art galleries, Venus de Milos and Anne Hathaway cottages. We're immune to the travelitis germ. We'll even expose ourselves to it for your sake, George, to make your holiday complete.

No, but seriously, George, we want you to talk. More than that, we intend to encourage you to talk. We want to learn new things, get fresh viewpoints, discard our old, worn-out prejudices. For instance, George, what effect do you think the Polish Corridor will have on the esthetic development of the Nordic races?

(Stare at George seriously a moment while he stammers or grins foolishly.)

Putting it another way, do you think it is dependent for its success upon the Youth Movement?

128 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

(Pause a moment while George fidgets and smirks.)

You know, I was reading the other day that the cartel theory is finding favor in many sections of Europe and I was wondering if this could be tied up in any way with the demand for bi-metallism. Did you hear much discussion of it?

(Pause a moment. This will probably be enough for George.)

Then too, George, I am sure we would all like to hear what you think of those French girls.

(George will undoubtedly grin broadly and say "Great!")

And there, my friends, is the proof that travel makes one "broad-minded."

We're glad to have you back, George, and we want to hear a lot more of your impressions as the days go by.

RESPONSE BY A RETURNED TRAVELER

First the Statue of Liberty! And now you! The Statue's all right as a cure for seasickness but give me a welcome like this as a cure for

homesickness every time. Oh yes, I was homesick. I don't think I cried, but there were times when I felt that something was lacking. In Italy I blamed it on the garlic and in England I blamed it on the tea, but all the time it was just because there was no one around from whom I could bum cigarettes with a clear conscience.

But you were with me in my thoughts, sometimes in the most unexpected places. I remember one time I was gazing at the hippopotamus at the London zoo and for no reason at all it came to me to wonder how dear old ——— (name of extra-fat man among guests) was getting on.

(Give one or two more inoffensive allusions to guests present.)

Yes, I had a splendid time, but I didn't neglect the cultural side in pursuit of the purely frivolous. I learned a lot. For one thing I learned to eat snails. I didn't learn to enjoy them, but I'm saving that up for the next trip. Then again, I learned how to avoid drinking tea. There are only two ways one can avoid drinking tea in England: By sud-

denly dropping dead and by saying in a firm tone, "I've had my tea, fawncy." I chose the latter method and won several compliments by my proficiency before my departure.

I learned that you can tell a German anywhere but you can't tell him much if your knowledge of German consists of "ja" and "wie gehts." And oh yes, I learned to say "prosit" but I never did learn what it means. You know that's the way Germans drink each other's health. They hold their beer steins in the air, solemnly bow and say "prosit." I got so I could do it with quite a flair. In France they say "a votre sante," which sounds pretty enough. In England it's "cheerio." But I had to travel six thousand miles across the ocean to learn that the sweetest words of all are—(raising glass) "let 'er go, boys."

WELCOME TO A FOREIGN VISITOR

By a Member of the Reception Committee

I don't know but that it's a good thing for both Americans and Europeans that the latter don't visit us in as great numbers as we visit them. It is a good thing for us in that we

appreciate them all the more when they do come. It is a good thing for the Europeans in that they don't have to listen to so many addresses of welcome. On second thought, it is a good thing for us that we don't have to DELIVER so many addresses of welcome. For you have no idea, Mr. ———, (name of guest of honor) how we enjoy delivering addresses of welcome. We simply revel in brushing up on our assorted Harvard accents and two-dollar words.

But I'm afraid we oversell ourselves. We're sort of like a man who puts a dinner coat over a soiled shirt. You come over here to know and understand Americans but all you ever get to know are speech-making and sightseeing Americans. And you can't understand them. We expatiate on the view from the Empire State building and ignore the views in the slums below. We drag you hundreds of miles through billboards, hot dog stands and dumps to make you peer into the Grand Canyon. We tell you of our unbounded energy and industry as we pass a hundred men lolling on a fence watching a steam shovel. We paint rosy pic-

132 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

tures of our universal spirit of progress, and our description is interrupted by the clatter of machine guns under the hotel window.

So, Mr. ———, please take everything welcoming orators and members of reception committees tell you with a grain of salt. We're not nearly so good, nice or clever as they'd have you believe. But on the other hand I hope you will try to realize that all our press-agentry has a laudable motive behind it. We put our best feet forward in the hope that you will see nothing to mar your visit and that you will enjoy being with us as much as we enjoy having you. And with the further hope that you will like us enough to come again soon.

ALUMNI DINNER

By an Old Grad

Here we are, back home again. For it was home in the truest sense for four years. For many of us it was so homelike that we couldn't bring ourselves to leave at the end of four years. In these halls our characters and ideals were largely formed. Under these trees our ambitions were determined as we dreamed of

the glorious days ahead of us. In these cloistered nooks blossomed and ripened friendships that were to brighten our lives.

I wish that we could recapture the emotions and thoughts of those days. I wish these trees and stones and desks could speak and remind us what manner of men we were before life rubbed the bloom from the peach. It would do many of us good.

I can imagine the spirit of old —— sitting up there in the tower on Alumni Day, watching us all come back, we who came to her ignorant, wondering boys and whom she blessed with high ideals and purposes and sent away to do great things in the world. And now we straggle back. Here comes the boy to whom she said good-bye but last year. His step is still confident, his head high and there's a smile on his lips.

Here comes another. Twenty years since he so proudly received his diploma from old Prexy. "Upon my soul," says the Spirit, "that's good old Bill! But what's happened? His face is lined and wrinkled and unsmiling; his step lags; his eyes are cold, his voice harsh,

134 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

his lips cynical. And where did he ever get that stomach?" The same good old Bill! Except that he's lost the faith and vision, the hopes and ideals, the heart and soul with which she endowed him.

Oh yes, she's glad to see us come back, that wise old Spirit. We're always welcome back home, whether we come as a prince or come as a pauper. But how it must grieve her. How she must wish that we could pack a suitcase and move back to our old rooms here for a while to relearn the truths she taught us and to unlearn most of that which the world calls wisdom.

DINNER FOR COLLEGE OR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

By an Alumnus or Invited Guest

Getting a lot of advice these days, aren't you? A lot of us old birds whose feathers have been plucked are telling you how to go through life singing like a skylark. A lot of us whose knowledge of life consists of stock tickers, bill collectors and lumbago plasters are getting kinks in our vocal cords pointing out to you

the important things in life. Most of us are wrong. Maybe I am too, but here goes.

You're too young to remember the World War. My but that was important, the most important thing in life to uncounted thousands. Making the World Safe for Democracy—Giving All in a War to End War. How we worked ourselves to a lather over it. And today—who remembers it or cares, except those whose bodies were ruined?

And if this great cause for which men sacrificed and died is proved by Time to be a fake, of no value, what is important? The political, social and economic problems over which we talk ourselves red in the face? Try to think of those that seemed so important five years ago. Oh they may, some of them, leave their mark on the pages of history, for good or bad, but by next year they won't be important to us as individuals. Next year we'll be wondering how we ever could have seen anything important in them. Next year we'll be working ourselves into nose bleeds over something else.

So what are the important things for you as

136 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

men and women? What are the things without which life would be miserable and barren? First comes health. The king with the world at his feet and pains in the stomach would give that world if he could eat and sleep like the court fool. Then come love, and friendship, and self-respect. And last, but not least, enough money to free one from suffering and torturing worry.

These things you **MUST** have. If you have them you will be happy whether you live in a mansion or whether you live in a cottage. You are starting out now to gather life's treasures and you have only so much time. Much of that which passes for treasure is imitation. Don't pass up that which is genuine and imperishable for that which has no more substance than the snows of Spring.

TOWN "BOOSTER" DINNER

By a Citizen

Since every knock's a boost, I think that in our campaign to put —— on the map if we had more knocks we'd have more boosts.

The trouble with booster campaigns is that

we spend so much time looking for things that could be boosted that we pass over a lot of things that should be booted. There should be less boosting on the front page and more booting in the back yard—booting out the old tin cans, the weeds, the decrepit, unpainted fences.

If each of us would knock himself in private a little he'd boost the town in public a lot, and it would be better boosting than a press agent can do. It's very easy to see the litter on the lawn next door, but if each of us would appoint himself a committee of one to boost himself, his home, his place of business, the official committee could point with pride without being like the resort hotel owner who said to an applicant for a job: "What do you think of our beautiful lake down there?" "Lake?" said the applicant. "What lake? I don't see any lake." "Huh," said the owner, "I can see you're not the man to write our advertising."

It's all very well to invite prospective residents to come to town and then haul them around and point with pride. But maybe they won't look where we're pointing. The trouble

138 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

with pointers-with-pride is that the only things they ever think of pointing to are things that cost money. There's more to a town than a memorial to the war veterans . . . miles of paved streets and a new fire engine. You can't enjoy sitting on your front porch in the twilight looking at a fire engine, and a paved street is nothing but so much concrete when it's lined with gas stations and hot dog stands. It takes cleanliness and friendliness, beautiful places and dutiful people, to make a town. And you don't need a bond issue to boost a town like that.

A STAG DINNER

By One of the Stags

This is just a pose, all this whooping and back-slapping about breaking the chains and being free for a night. The keepers don't even have to come and get us. We run back and snap on the leg irons ourselves.

The girls think we come down here to get ourselves boiled and then roast them. But there isn't a fellow here who wouldn't rather be at home this very minute if he wasn't feel-

ing well. You birds who have never been married seem to pity us for some reason or other. But let me tell you there's not one of us here tonight who would ever think of stepping outside his house without his wife if she didn't let him. There's not a married man in this room who could possibly bring himself to envy you single ones if he didn't want to.

You seem to think we're martyrs. We're not martyrs. A martyr's a person who's eaten by a lion and how many lions have you ever seen around this town? You make fun of us because we're henpecked. I can assure you that we like being henpecked. I once knew a fellow who wasn't henpecked and what happened to him? Caught pneumonia and died the same day.

Why everything we have in life we owe to our wives and there's scarcely a day that we're not reminded of it one way or another. Marriage is the making of a man. It makes him realize the truth of the saying that it is the woman who pays and pays and pays, often entirely too much. It makes him see beauty where he never thought it existed—in creamed

140 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

spinach on toast and scented toilet tissue, for instance. It makes him hustle to make both ends meet and it makes him tramp down here to eat too much, drink too much and talk too much in an effort to convince himself that he's having a good time when all the time he ought to be sitting over there in a corner by himself thanking the Lord that he's lucky enough to be allowed out at all.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DINNER

By a Member

What is it about The Chamber of Commerce, this Chamber of Commerce, any Chamber of Commerce, that wins it the high esteem, confidence and respect of the people of this country? Many organizations, although well-known, are as often the butt of jeers and jests as they are the recipients of praise. But the mere name Chamber of Commerce commands attention and a respectful hearing. A man doesn't have to apologize for his Chamber of Commerce membership and smart-alecky authors do not write books and plays about him. We may make mistakes or advocate

programs unpopular in some quarters, but such mistakes and advocacies do not call forth the torrents of ridicule and derision that so often engulf many other organizations. People may differ with us, but the differences are expressed more temperately and in better spirit. We are given more credit for good judgment and knowing what we are talking about.

And why? Certainly not because we are "boosters" and trying to further the interests of our communities. Many other organizations are working to that end and frequently have to listen to horse laughs because of it. Certainly not because we are trying to devise more and better ways of making money. I don't think Chambers of Commerce have a monopoly on that program. Certainly not because we are working to lift business to a higher level, correct abuses and replace ruinous, cut-throat practices with efficient, scientific coöperation. Countless individuals and organizations are working to that end and as often as not are rewarded by being called theorists, idealists and cranks.

I believe the principal reason why the Cham-

142 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

ber of Commerce is looked to as a leader is because it minds its own business. Because it frankly, openly and persistently sticks to the job it has set for itself—the making of money, and because it rarely yields to the temptation to tell the world what it shall eat, what it shall drink and wherewithal it shall be clothed. It is a strong temptation and many organizations yield to it. Many work themselves into fine frenzies getting up petitions and appointing commissions to confer with the Governor on subjects which do not concern them in the slightest. The Organ Pumpers' Association petitions against teaching birth control to Hot-tentots and the International League of Back-Seat Drivers views with alarm the spread of the chewing gum habit among Eskimos.

We are a nation of 120,000,000 dictators, each one determined to dictate how the other 119,999,999 are to conduct themselves. As individuals we can do little damage but just let us get appointed to a committee and we're rarin' to go. But when a person or organization pretends to know so much about everything the suspicion is apt to get around that he

doesn't know so much about anything. And then influence and opportunity for leadership are gone.

I believe we are comparatively free from that kind of thing and that as long as we remain so we will not lack power. Let's stick to our knitting.

AN APPEAL FOR FUNDS FOR CHARITY

How many of you folks belong to clubs—Masons, Rotary, city, country, pinochle, goldfish or what have you? Hold up your hands. Ah, that's very nice. I hope you're all up in your dues.

But there's another organization we all belong to and in which most of us are behind in our dues: The Brotherhood of Man. And now the treasurer is calling for some cash.

It seems the Brotherhood's property here in ——— is in need of repair. There are a lot of unpleasant sights around the grounds the officers think should be fixed up: Skinny little children with empty stomachs; old men and women whose bones ache after a lifetime of

144 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

toiling for a world that has forgotten they're living, and who toss a coin to see whether it's to be the poorhouse or the river.

You don't get publicly posted for delinquency in the Brotherhood of Man but the President sees to it that each of us gets a little private notice and those private notices have a way of ruining our days and making us feel cheap more effectively than a printed list on the country club bulletin board can do. It's a funny thing about those private notices the President sends out. They're not like other notices you can crumple up, throw away and forget. Oh no. You can't get rid of the President's notices. They keep on coming. You stamp on one, tear it up, burn it out of your mind, and the first thing you know there's another one. Persistent, pesky things. They come when you least expect them and least want them. You can run away and hide, but the President'll find you, and in the strangest places too. Sometimes in a dingy home where there's a sick mother moaning with pain and an unemployed father groaning because he hasn't a dollar to buy medicine. Sometimes in

a bedraggled pile of furniture on the sidewalk, with a little family standing beside it wondering what to do next. And wondering, further, if they mightn't as well resign from the Brotherhood.

Oh yes, He'll find us and tell us we're falling down on our club obligations. But let's beat Him to it. Let's catch up with our dues. The club will mean more to us and more to thousands of members right here in ——— who aren't getting much out of it right now. If we can pay \$5 to fill a jackpot we can pay \$5 to fill a stew pot.

AT A VETERANS' REUNION BANQUET

I don't feel right talking to you birds with this fancy china and sterling lead silverware in front of me. It doesn't lend itself to the good old vocabulary. And anchovies! (or any other luxury) Bless my soul! When we were back there in ——— watching hell pop who'd have thought that in the year ——— we'd be sitting here fat and fatuous munching anchovies. I guess we must have fought to make the world safe for anchovies. But I hope we don't get

like the tramp who said to the lady of the house: "The lady next door just gave me a piece of cake. Will you give me something?" "Certainly," said the lady. "I'll give you a soda mint tablet."

I guess most of us thought we wouldn't be sitting anywhere eating anything. And a lot of the original us aren't. It's all right for those of us who came back to sing and yawp around—they wouldn't want us to do any differently—but let's save a few quiet moments of remembrance for them. Let's sing softly, just once, the chorus of "There's a Long, Long Trail." You know, they would have liked anchovies too.

(Lead singing of chorus softly.)

But speaking of anchovies, you know if you close your eyes they don't taste so different from that blessed old salmon. And good old corn willie, why—but maybe we'd better drop the corn willie. On second thought I don't believe anything EVER tasted like corn willie. I guess that's the reason the Lord and the advertising boys and girls gave all these mouth

washes to the world. We had to have something to take that taste out of the mouth.

The other day I was talking to a man who is an untiring and sincere worker in the cause of peace. He was too old to take active part in the war, but recently he had attended a veterans' reunion as a guest and was horrified by the spirit of revelry, joking and indifference to the curse of war he saw there. "I can't understand it," he said. "Of all the people in the world, you'd think veterans, who saw it first-hand and who brought back the scars of it on their bodies and in their souls, would be the most active in denouncing war every minute of their lives. But those I mentioned it to didn't seem to take it seriously."

It is funny, isn't it? And I guess it's corn willie's fault, and latrine police, and those old C.C. buddies and a lot of other things you just couldn't take seriously in the war—OUR war.

ON BEING ELECTED PRESIDENT OF A CLUB

I congratulate you on electing me president. You should feel proud and honored. By your action you have again proved of what stuff you

are made. You have demonstrated anew that courage, that determination to achieve your ends no matter what the obstacles, that willingness to tempt fate that have made you leaders in civic thought and endeavor. For any club that can survive a year of me as president is destined for great things.

But really, that's all bunk. A person is supposed to say something different to catch people's attention when starting a speech. Because I'll really make a very good president. I'm constitutionally fitted for it. Just look at the qualities necessary in a president, any president, from the President of the United States to the president of a bank. In the first place, a president is supposed to be able to do a lot of talking without saying what's really in his mind and heart. I can do that; in fact I'm doing it right now.

In the second place, a president must have that knowledge of human nature which enables him unerringly to pick the right man for the job—the one who can be kidded into sticking around and doing the work so the president can go out and play golf. I think I'll be pretty

good at that. In fact I already have some ideas in mind along that line.

Thirdly, a president must be able to wear striped pants and frock coat gracefully so he will be a credit to the organization when he steps to the platform at the end of his term to take credit for everything that's been done.

So with myself as a good example and inspiration, if you'll all put your shoulders to the wheel I think I'll be able to accomplish great things. (Earnestly.) And if I wasn't so deeply moved by your expression of confidence in me that I'd get sentimental and stuttery if I attempted to be serious, I'd tell the things I hope we CAN do together, and thank you from the bottom of my heart for thus honoring me.

ATHLETIC CLUB DINNER

By a Member

A dinner like this is certainly grand training for us athletes—the marathon talking kind. You can have your thick steaks and raw eggs, but they're not in the running with this meal for limbering up the old vocal cords and taking the kinks out of the adjective reserves.

150 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

Speaking of running, did you hear about the girl who complained that she never found anything in her stocking at Christmas but a runner? "What do you expect to find," asked her friend, "a pole vaulter?"

On the other hand, it's a good thing we don't have a meal like this often; it's too conducive to talk. You can't put the shot after you've put away such a feast and you can't throw the hammer after you've sat around here three or four hours throwing the bull, and it seems to me that too many of us are trying out for the Toreador team and not enough for the tug-of-war team.

A lot of people seem to think that as soon as they get a couple of creases across the tummy or the white caps begin to show on the horizon that they can't be athletic any more. But that's just the time they **NEED** to be athletic. The dictionary says "athletic" means "strong, robust, vigorous," and we whose record-breaking days are over need to be strong, robust and vigorous even more than the young fellows who represent us so splendidly and who keep adding to our trophy collection.

Their bodies will take care of themselves for years, but we must coax ours along if we expect to make any kind of showing as we lumber down the home stretch to break the tape in life's track meet.

I'd like to see every member of this club, no matter how old he is, get out and do something HIMSELF to give the old body a break, even if it's only setting-up exercises. Let's do less betting on the other fellow's account and more sweating on our own. The important thing about athletics is not recreation but recreation. Let's pay less attention to being members of an athletic club and more to being athletic members of a club.

DINNER FOR THE WINNING TEAM

Who was it said he'd rather write his country's songs than be king? I don't remember, and don't you bother thinking about it for it really doesn't matter. What I started out to say is that I think I'd rather be on a winning team—at least our winning team—than be king OR write songs. But since I don't see much chance of being king, writing songs or

152 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

being on any team, to say nothing of a winning one, I'll have to be satisfied to be one of those who also sat—and cheered.

I don't know but that in some ways I'd rather be one of the also-sats. If things go wrong and the team doesn't win, nobody can blame us. We just pat the players on the back and say in a fatherly way: "Well, boys, better luck next time. Remember, sunshine always follows rain."

On the other hand, if the team is a winner, we give 'em a banquet and make speeches telling them what a moral support we've been and how we've all done our bit to bring honor to dear old ——— (name of college, club or town). The players can't contradict us because we're paying for the dinner. Then the players get up and tell us how they couldn't possibly have won without us behind 'em to give them new life and courage. And we don't contradict them because—well, it just wouldn't be polite, they being our guests and all.

And so everybody's satisfied. You fellows on the team are satisfied because you won. But we're satisfied for more than that. We're

satisfied because we were permitted to cheer the brainiest, cleanest, gamest, most sportsmanlike bunch of boys that ever wore the —— (club colors). It doesn't matter whether you ever win another game, you've won a place in our hearts forever.

And so, gentlemen, I propose a toast to the team, *our* team: When it's three and two in the ninth, the bases are loaded and the score is tied, may you ever knock a homer in the game of life.

RESPONSE BY TEAM CAPTAIN

Really, we had no idea we were so good until we heard all these nice things that have been said about us this evening. But let me tell you this, we wouldn't have been good, we wouldn't have accomplished what we did for —— (name of college, town or club) if it hadn't been for you. It takes more than muscle, coaching and team-work to win games. It takes confidence. Confidence in yourself? Yes. But you can't have confidence in yourself unless those in the grand stand (or side-lines) have confidence in you; unless they let you

154 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

know they appreciate it when you've done your best, but more important, unless they let you know that they don't expect you to knock a home run every time you come to bat.

We've felt your faith in us when we were in tight places on the field and that faith pulled us through. And so my team-mates and I are honored to drink to the health of the heart of our team—our rooters.

A DINNER FOR THE BOSS

My, but this is a wonderful opportunity. You don't often get the chance to stand up in front of the boss and tell him what you think of him. And of course he couldn't very well get unpleasant about it because we're paying for the dinner.

And there's an idea! We might give him a dinner every week. Better still, we could invite him out to dinner individually when the occasion called for it. If his drive isn't working on Sunday and we hear about it in more ways than one on Monday, we could say, "Yes sir, of course, Mr. ———, my fault, Boss." And then in the next breath we could say, "I'd feel

honored if you would dine with me tonight, Mr. ——.” And then when he gets to the dinner, hot dog!

And so I've been looking forward to this dinner with considerable gloating satisfaction. I could hardly wait to tell him that—that—er, let's see, what was that now? (Pretend to think deeply.) I can't seem to remember it, but no matter, it'll come to me later. Anyway, there are other things. For instance, there is his—his habit of—of—h'm, that's funny, I could have sworn I had something else to take up with him. But you all know what I mean. You've all felt that your lives were blighted because he—he —— Oh well, what's the use in giving further examples? You all know how he's destroyed your sense of honor by sticking up for you even when he knows you're in the wrong. You know how he's sapped your ambition by staying at the office until midnight doing worth-while work you could have been doing if he hadn't sent you home to waste your lives on bridge. You know how he's shattered your self-reliance by insisting on helping you out when things go wrong at home.

And so, knowing all that, I ask you to drink the health of the boss who is the most inconsiderate of—HIMSELF.

RESPONSE BY THE BOSS

I've heard a lot here this evening about the boss. And I like it. You know, there might be a little money in being boss, and prestige, if you want to call it that, but there's not much fun. And it does pep up a boss to hear that he's not such a cantankerous, faultfinding wretch as he often imagines himself to be. And I thank you.

So much for the boss. But we've heard nothing about the bosses. They really run this company. The boss may lay down an official policy, but the bosses have the power to determine whether that policy is worthy of execution. Without their knowledge, their industry, their faithfulness, there would be no dividends, no salaries, no company. The boss holds office only with their sanction. He wouldn't last a month if it weren't for their coöperation. He can sit in his swivel chair and issue pompous orders, but what good is an order if the real

bosses have the power to O. K. or veto it? If they have the power to choose between vision and stagnation, coöperation and antagonism, honesty and shady dealing, efficiency and waste? The success of this company in the past ——— years speaks for itself. So I am proud to drink to the health of its REAL bosses—you boys and girls in the advertising, sales, production and all other departments.

BUSINESS CONVENTION BANQUET

These get-together days are wonderful. They iron out a lot of kinks in our business life and smooth over a lot of antagonisms. They enable us to find solutions to perplexing problems and remedies for destructive faults. We get new ideas. We learn how to make more money. We learn that the way to success lies not in a cutthroat, survival-of-the-fittest policy but in friendly coöperation toward a common end.

But what is that end? I think that we, as well as all other businesses, trades and professions, do not pay enough attention to it. Or, as is so often the case, we lose sight of it altogether and thus fail to achieve that measure

158 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

of success which would be ours were we to keep it in mind and work for it constantly.

The end of all our conferences, all our individual and combined efforts, it seems to me, should be to make our business more valuable to society. And I believe that if we as individuals and as a group would pay more attention to giving the world something it needs and wants and less to coaxing a dollar out of its pocket we would find that most of our problems would be solved for us.

I dislike using the word "service." It has sunk so low in meaning and public esteem. TRUE service is the end we should all strive for. But true service does not consist in wrapping a piece of junk in cellophane. You're not rendering anybody a service by wiping off his windshield after selling him five gallons of punk gasoline.

It seems to me that modern business pays too much attention to the advertising, sales and collection departments. All they have to offer the world are oral and printed words, and you're not doing a man much of a favor by talking and writing letters to him.

Too much of our time is spent devising more efficient, "scientific" methods of kidding people into wanting our products until our salesmen can get around to buffalo them into signing on the dotted line. After they've done it we have to blackjack the money out of their pockets. To that end we ransack the world for masters of pen, brush and tongue. And when sales and profits drop a great wailing goes up and the sales and advertising managers are fired. What ought to be fired is the useless, shoddy gewgaw they're more than likely trying to sell.

Let's spend more time trying to make worthwhile things and less trying to sell pretty packages. Let's quit giving so much credit to the fellow who can sell electric refrigerators to the Eskimos.

POLITICAL DINNER ON EVE OF ELECTION

A lot of you men played football for the honor of dear old something or other back in the good old days when you could run fifteen consecutive feet without having your stomach fly up and hit you on the chin. Others of us

160 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

have had to take our football on the side-lines. But you all know what it's like. You all know you've got to have pluck, determination and that never-say-die spirit to win a football game.

Well, we're in a football game now. Have been in it since —— (date of start of campaign). It's a tough game and it's been getting tougher all the time. And we're playing against a tough team, a team that won't stop at little things like straight-arming and punching in the scrimmage if it thinks it can get away with it. But it won't get away with it —this time!

By team-work and head-work we've worked our way down the field to the enemy's twenty-yard line, and now we've come to the last minute of play with the score tie. Spectators are cheering. Newspaper boys are all set. We come out of the huddle. Take our positions. Referee's whistle. Signals. The ball snaps back and we're off! Are we going to get thrown for a loss? Come on, are we? Or are we going to cross the goal line? What do you say?

Remember, every one of you has a place on

this team and when the referee's whistle blows at seven o'clock election day morning, snap into it. This is no time for a player to stop in midfield and make eyes at his girl in the grand stand. Remember, every play we've pulled off so far, everything we've learned of strategy, has been leading up to this final run. Remember, you've got to stay on your toes, charging the line, running interference, taking out tacklers, if these fellows we have asked to carry the ball for us are to cross the line.

RESPONSE BY A CANDIDATE

On the eve of election I feel much as I imagine doughboys must have felt when the whistle blew at the zero hour and they scrambled out of the trenches to start across No-Man's Land—bewildered, insignificant and prayerfully hopeful that the boys who were backing them up from behind wouldn't forget to keep firing those guns.

It's a fine feeling when a recruit gets his nice new uniform and swaggers home to give the folks a treat and convince them that the country is now safe. And it's a grand feeling

when a candidate gets his first nomination and realizes that the nation has at last come to its senses. But fortunately for the country and unfortunately for the soldier's and candidate's self-esteem, both soon come to realize that there's more to war and political campaigns than Sam Browne belts and pretty speeches. Both soon come to realize that maybe they're not so all-fired important after all and that they have something in common with the young bride who was doing her first marketing. "What can I do fer you, Mum?" asked the grocer. "I hardly know," said the sweet young thing. "What are they eating this year?"

Like the young bride I have good intentions and motives. But I too need a great deal of help and advice if I am ever to learn to be a credit to you. But I'll never get the chance to prove what a great credit I can be unless you get out behind me on election day and keep your guns busy popping off the enemy and popping out votes. Otherwise I'll be in the position of the laborer on the construction gang:

"Help! Help!" cried an Italian laborer near the mud flats of the river.

"What's the matter?" came a voice from the construction shanty.

"Queek. Bringa da shove. Bringa da peek. My Giovanni, he's stuck in da mud."

"How far in?" said the voice from the shanty.

"Up to hees knees."

"Oh, let him walk out," replied the other.

"No can do. He wronga end up."

POLITICAL VICTORY DINNER

By a Leader

Well, boys and girls, we did it. And I think we're entitled to a few days of gloating. But not too many. You know we've got to start working for the next election and the campaign starts ——— (date of inauguration).

A lot of people have the idea that all you have to do to get office is to make a few pretty speeches. You might **GET** office that way but you don't **KEEP** it. It's easy enough to make nice speeches and promises and paint rosy pictures of the future when the band is playing

and the boys are all out in their plug hats waving the flags. And it's just as easy to forget 'em the next day. But the voters have better memories. You know about the fellow who went into a store, real angry, and said to the proprietor: "I thought you said this was a woollen sweater? The label says it's cotton." "I put that on to fool the moths," said the merchant. And the man who makes pretty speeches to fool the voters is going to find himself in an uncomfortable position four years from now. He's going to feel like the man who was asked by his friend how he spent his income. "About 30 per cent. for shelter, 30 per cent. for clothing, 40 per cent. for food and 20 per cent. for amusement," he said. "But that adds up to 120 per cent.," said the other. "Don't I know it," replied the puzzled one.

And what's more, it'll be too late to do anything about it then. What our party does in the next four years is more important than what it says in the month before election. That's why we're in here tonight eating cake while our late opponents are outside hoping

we'll pitch 'em a few crumbs. They talked so much they forgot to pull in the fish.

To the victor belongs the spoils, and it's all right as long as the spoils don't spoil the victor. But when members of a political party get the idea that people vote for them because they're kind to animals or because they look nice in a frock coat, it's all over but thinking up the alibis.

POLITICAL VICTORY DINNER

By a Successful Candidate

"The tumult and the shouting dies
The captains and the kings depart ——"

And they do. They stick around until the spoils of war have been divided and then they hustle home to have a good time and leave the poor privates behind to clean up the mess. And I feel a good deal like one of the poor privates.

Through the leadership and inspiration of you men and women of courage and vision we have achieved a splendid victory. We have promised great things and drawn uncompre-

hensive plans for the future of the city (or state, county, etc.). And now here we are, the successful candidates, with a lot of honor on one hand and a lot of promises to carry out and plans to fulfill on the other.

I for my part am glad to attempt it. I am grateful for the opportunity to justify your faith in me. I'll spare no effort to make my little corner of the new administration a success and more firmly to cement the party in public confidence and esteem. But you know we privates can't do much without the generals, and you are the generals who made the victory possible. Don't drop out of the army now and leave us holding the fort alone just because we won this skirmish. The enemy might be outside looking in right now, but they can make some mighty mean sneers through the window.

I am grateful for your encouragement, advice and support in the campaign. But I'll be even more grateful for it in City Hall. It makes the army feel much better when it knows it can call in the reserves.

TOASTS

WINE AND CONVIVIALITY

There's an old proverb which runs, I think—
There are five reasons why men drink,
Good wine—a friend—because I'm dry—or
else I may be by and bye—or any other
reason why.

Here's to wine that's old and heady; here's
to women young and ready.

Here's to wine, the great magician, that can
make a monkey out of an ass.

God made man
As frail as a bubble;
God made love
And love made trouble;
God made wine
And is it sin
For man to drink wine
To drown trouble in?

168 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

Here's to the bottle; may it never stop going around until our heads start.

Here's to wine, woman and song. May the woman never be fat and the wine and song never be flat.

A book of verses underneath the bough
A jug of wine, a loaf of bread—HERE'S HOW!

Here's to wine, wit and wisdom;
Wine enough to sharpen wit; wit
Enough to give zest to wine and wisdom
Enough to know when we have had enough.

Some take their gold
In minted mold,
And some in harps hereafter,
But give me mine
In bubbles fine
And keep the change in laughter.

Here's to the man who takes the pledge,
Who keeps his word and does not hedge,
Who won't give up and who won't give in
Till the last man's out and there's no more gin.

Here's to the man who knows enough
To know he's better without the stuff;
Himself without, the wine within,
So come, me hearties, let's begin.

Here's to wining and dining, that help kill
so many dreary hours and so many dreary
people.

HOME AND MOTHER

Here's to home, the golden setting in which
the brightest jewel is Mother.

Here's to home, the place where we are
treated the best and grumble the most.

Here's to another man's wife and my best
sweetheart—my Mother.

TO THE LADIES

Here's to woman—the most changeable fruit
in the Garden of Eden. We think we've picked
a peach only to find we've got the razzberry.

Women are our ribs; may we always have
them and to spare—spare ribs!

170 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

Here's to the two of us
I'm glad there aren't three of us
For though there are so few of us
That's all there ought to be of us
Just you of us
And me of us.

Here's to the ladies—no matter whether they live on the other side of the Seven Seas, they can always make us come across.

Here's to woman—"She needs no eulogy; she speaks for herself."

Here's to woman—"The fairest work of the Great Author. The edition is large and no man should be without a copy."

Here's to woman—if she cannot be captain of a ship may she always command a smack.

Here's to lovely woman—the rainbow after the storm, the Spring Beauty after the winter snows, the sunrise after the darkness of night, the bills after the first of the month.

Woman—the conundrum of the age; we can't guess her but we won't give her up.

“Drink to fair woman, who, I think,
Is most entitled to it,
For if anything ever could drive me to drink,
She certainly could do it.”

Here's to woman—she'll not only give you a piece of her mind but she'll give you the works.

Here's to man—he can afford anything he can get. Here's to woman—she can afford anything she can get a man to get for her.

—GEORGE ADE.

Here's to the dear girls, God bless 'em and keep 'em, because I can't afford to.

A baby wants its màmá,
A schoolgirl wants a fling,
A maiden wants a husband,
A wife wants everything.

172 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

I fill this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle sex
The seeming paragon.
Her health! And would on earth
there stood
Some more of such a frame,
That life might be all poetry
And weariness a name.

—EDWARD COATE PICKNEY.

Here's to the ladies—the whipped cream on
the cold custard of life.

TO LOVE

Here's to love—that makes wise men out of
fools, fools out of wise men and cuckoos out
of wise old owls.

Here's to love—may it burn so brightly in
our hearts that the tears of misfortune can
never extinguish it.

Here's to love—the aspirin tablet that takes
away the headache of life.

Wine is good
Love is better;
False morals spin a spider's
fetter.
So fill up the bowl,
Be a jolly good soul,
And you'll be loved by your
girl when you get her.

—ODIN OPTIC.

Here's a sigh to those who love me,
And a smile to those who hate;
And whatever sky's above me,
Here's a heart for every fate.
Were't the last drop in the well
As I gasped upon the brink,
Ere my fainting spirit fell,
'Tis to thee that I would drink.

—LORD BYRON.

Here's to Dan Cupid, the little squirt,
He's lost his pants, he's lost his shirt,
He's lost 'most everything but his aim,
Which shows that love is a losing game.

174 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

Here's to love—with its billets doux, bills and coos, biliousness, bills and bills of divorce-ment.

Here's to love—the shock absorber that takes the bumps out of the road to happiness.

Let's drink to love—may it be grounded in faith, nurtured with hope and watered with remembrance.

Here's to love, that halves the sorrows of life and doubles its joys.

Here's to love—

Its do's, its don'ts,
Its wills, its won'ts,
Its smiles, its frowns,
Its ups, its downs,
Its health, its ills,
Its wealth, its bills;
Like beef stew
Love's rather flat
Without a lot
Of this and that.

I will drink to the woman who wrought my woe
In the diamond morning of long ago;
To the splendor caught from the orient skies
That thrilled in the dark of her hazel eyes,
Her large eyes filled with the glow of the south
And the dewy wine of her warm red mouth.

—WINTER.

“Here’s to the lasses we’ve loved,
 my lad,
 Here’s to the lips we’ve pressed;
For of kisses and lasses
Like liquor in glasses,
 The last is always the best.”

“When we go home late at night, may we
always find our wives where Cain found his—
in the land of Nod.”

Here’s to the sweets that are out of sight
And not in our lawful diet,
To the stolen day and pilfered night
To each and every dear delight
Including the kiss on the quiet.

176 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

Here's to the girl who talks of love,
Whose eyes light up like stars above,
Whose lips say things one cannot write—
But not of the fellow she met last night.

Here's to the girl whose fancy strays
On into endless blissful days,
Whose thoughts are filled with ecstasy—
Provided of course she is thinking of me.

Here's hoping that Cupid deals you all grand
slams in hearts in the game of love.

Here's to love—the only fire for which there
is no insurance.

Here's hoping we may kiss whom we please
and please whom we kiss.

Here's to the rich girl even if she does make
a poor wife.

Here's to love—the umbrella that keeps off
the rains of unhappiness; may it never turn
inside out.

Here's to the girl with eyes of brown
If you ask for a kiss she will call you down;
Here's to the girl with eyes of blue,
If you ask for one she will say—take two.

Here's to our wives
They keep our hives
In little Bees and honey;
They soothe life's shocks,
They darn our socks,
But oh! can't they spend money!

Here's to the girl whose heart is warm;
Whose head is cool in the roughest storm;
Whose glance is hot when I pass her by
But icy cold to the other guy.

Here's to the man who takes a wife
May he make no mistake
For it makes a lot of difference
Whose wife it is you take.

FRIENDSHIP AND GOOD FELLOWSHIP

Here's to friendship, the wine of life—let's
drink of it and to it.

178 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

A health to you,
And wealth to you,
And the best that life can give to you;
May fortune still be kind to you
And happiness be true to you,
And life be long and good to you
Is the toast of all your friends to you.

To our friends—may bad luck follow them
all the days of their lives and never catch up
with them.

“May we never want a friend nor a bottle
to give him.”

May we ever be able to serve a friend and
noble enough to conceal it.

To our friends—may the happiest days of
their past be the saddest days of their future.

Let's drink to the brew of friendship, that
goes to the heart but never to the head.

May the bark of friendship never founder on the rock of deceit.

Happy are we met, happy have we been,
Happy may we part, and happy meet again.

PATRIOTIC TOASTS

Here's to the Army—may it ever keep the Stars and Stripes implanted firmly in our hearts.

To the Army—may its guns be loaded only to batter down the citadels of oppression and defend the strongholds of justice.

Here's to the Navy—with the Dove of Peace forever roosting in the crow's nest and the American Eagle ever standing by the guns.

To the Navy—may it ever find safe harbor in our hearts.

I give you muscles of steel, nerves of iron, tongues of silver, hearts of gold, necks of leather—The Marines!

180 *Toasts and After-Dinner Speeches*

To the "Devil Dogs"—may they ever show their teeth to the curs who are snapping at their heels.

Here's to the Ship of State—may she ever steer a safe course between the rocks of privilege and the shoals of corruption.

To our country! Lift your glasses!
To its sun-capped mountain passes,
To its forests, to its streams,
To its memories, its dreams,

To its laughter, to its tears,
To the hope that after-years
Find us plodding on the way
Without so much tax to pay.

Here's to the American Eagle—may he eat out of the hand that pats him and eat off the hand that tries to pull out his tail feathers.

Our country! When right, to be kept right.
When wrong, to be put right!

—CARL SCHURZ.

The Lily of France may fade,
The Thistle and Shamrock wither,
The Oak of England may decay
But the Stars shine on forever.

America! Where everyone knows he's free
and where everyone's free to nose around in
everyone else's business.

Here's to the American Eagle—the liberty
bird that permits no liberties.

May the blossoms of liberty never be
blighted by the frosts of disloyalty.

Here's to the President—may he have a nose
to smell out rottenness, ears to hear rumors of
peril, eyes to see what needs to be done, tongue
to speak the truth and hands to stick in his
pockets when selfish groups call at the White
House looking for handouts.

To the President of the United States—may
he be inaugurated with Hope, serve with
Honesty and retire with Honor.

182 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

To the men who shoot off the guns—invisible in peace, invincible in war. To the men who shoot off their faces—invisible in peace, invisible in war.

To the President—may he make the White House a lighthouse to guide the Ship of State through the seas of perplexity.

To America—the nursery of learning and the birthplace of heroes.

May those who root up the tree of liberty be crushed by its fall.

May America, like a tennis ball, rebound the harder she is struck.

THE CITIES

Here's to Chicago, where everything dates from the Fair

Where they know the full value of good hot air
When there's prospect of business they'll
always stand treat

For their hearts are as big as their women's feet.

Here's to old 'Frisco, out on the Coast
The American Paris, her favorite boast
Once in every nine minutes
Just watch them and time it
They'll sing you that song of the glorious
climate.

LIFE

Here's hoping that you may live to eat the
hen that scratches on your grave.

May you LIVE all the days of your life.

—SWIFT.

Here's to life—it's better to smoke here than
hereafter.

As we ride over the bumpy roads of life may
friendship be our springs, love our shock
absorbers and wine the anesthetic when we
land in a ditch.

May you live as long as you like and have
all you like as long as you live.

184 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

The moving finger writes, and having writ,
Moves on: Nor all our piety nor wit
Can lure it back to cancel half a line—
So come, drink up, there's still a lot of it.

DEATH

Up with your glasses steady
This world is a world of lies
Quaff a cup to the dead already
And here's to the next man that dies.

To Death—Here's looking at you.

To Death, the old joker—He's going to have
one on us all some day.

BRIDGE FIEND

Here's to the bridge fiend, and may he
always have honors in the game of life.

GOLF

Here's to golf, that enables us to build our-
selves up on 18 holes and tear ourselves down
on the 19th.

GOOD LUCK

May you ever be smiled upon by Dame Fortune, but never by her daughter, Miss Fortune.

In the game of life may you always get the breaks but never get broken.

PATIENCE

Here's to the maid who sits down to wait for a husband; here's to a wife who sits up to wait for one.

TRAVEL

Drink a bottle to us in London
And a stein in old Berlin,
Some rare champagne
If you get to Spain
Is nice to remember us in;
You may drink to our health in Paris
With a flagon of old cognac,
But if you want the toast
That'll please us the most
Just bring us a bottle back.

186 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

May you get through the passport office without detention, through Europe without dissension and through the customs without detection.

ECONOMY

Here's to economy, that enables two to live as cheaply as one thought he could.

LAUGHTER

Come me hearties, let's have laughter,
Ring the welkin, sing and shout,
Even though the morning after
There's nothing much to laugh about.

TO LYING

Here's to the fellow who lies to me,—
Oh how I'd like to fell him—
And here's hoping the fellow who lies to me
Believes all the lies I tell him.

Here's to the girls who lie,
Here's to the girls who deceive,
Here's to the girls whom I
Never know when to believe.

Here's to the girls who cheat,
Here's to the girls who betray
With love so mockingly sweet,
Who kiss and then run away.

Here's to those lying eyes
I really owe them a lot,
They've made me realize
What a wonderful break I got.

POVERTY

Here's to poverty, that makes us so hard up
we can afford but few of the things we'd be
better off without.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Here's to righteousness, and may it never
make us like some of the righteous.

COMPROMISE

Here's to the spirit of compromise, and may
our competitors ever be willing to make con-
cessions and may we always be willing to take
them.

MEEKNESS

Here's to the meek, and may they inherit
the dearth.

MONEY

Money talks, but nobody cares what kind of grammar it uses.

MERRIMENT

Care to our coffin adds a nail, no doubt,
And every grin so merry draws one out.

TO MAN

Here's to man—he is like a coal oil lamp; he is not especially bright, he is often turned down; he generally smokes and he frequently goes out at night.

PROGRESS

Here's to progress and growth—and may we not stop growing at both ends when we start growing in the middle.

EDUCATION AND TEACHERS

Here's to teachers—may they teach our eyes to see the truth, our ears to hear it, our lips to speak it and our hands and hearts to work for it.

Here's to the teachers, and may they give us stout hearts and keen minds against the time when we enroll in the post graduate course of Hard Knocks.

Here's to education, that teaches us so many polite and refined ways of taking money away from the other fellow.

To education, that teaches us how to govern the world but not our own children.

DOCTOR

Here's to the physician, and may we not judge his ability by the praise undertakers bestow on him.

May we be good talkers but never get like ginger ale—flat after it's uncorked a few minutes.

BEAUTY

The whisper of a beautiful woman may be heard farther than the call of duty.

190 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

THE BANKER

Here's to the banker, who lends you an umbrella when the sun is shining and demands it back as soon as it starts to rain.

Here's to the banker, and may he never salt away money in the brine of other people's tears.

CONSCIENCE

Here's to conscience, and may we do right and fear no man; don't write and fear no woman.

ABSENT FRIENDS

Though out of sight, we recognize them with our glasses.

CONTENTMENT

May we never complain without cause and never have cause to complain.

May we sail over the sea of usefulness to the port of contentment.

SYMPATHY

May we never feel want or ever want feeling.

TEMPERANCE

Here's to a temperance supper,
With water in glasses tall,
And coffee and tea to end with—
And me not there at all.

Here's to the girl who never drinks,
Who from the cursed liquor shrinks,
Who never once forgets herself
As she sits alone on her lonely shelf.

SLEEP

Come, drink to sleep, that gift divine,
Sweet Nature's antidote for wine,
That can with magic touch restore
So we can rise and drink some more.

Come, drink to sleep that cools the brow
So we can carry on, somehow,
So we can drink a while and then
Fall peacefully to sleep again.

192 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

LADY DRIVER

It's easy enough to be merry
When there isn't a jolt or a jar,
But the man worth while
Is the man who can smile
When his wife is driving the car.

REGRETS

May we drain the cup of pleasure without a
hangover of regret.

AFTER DINNER STORIES AND JOKES

A COLORED minister was warning his congregation of the awfulness of the lower regions.

"You all hab been down to de stove foundry," he said, "and seen dat melted iron a-runnin' out of dem spouts like red hot molasses. Well, in hell dey use dat for ice-cream."

The guest at the small country tavern mournfully accosted the proprietor in the morning.

"Did you ever hear of the straw that broke the camel's back?" he said.

"Certainly," said the host.

"Well, you'll find it in the bed I tried to sleep in last night," said the guest.

The maid tapped timidly on the professor's study door and whispered:

"Gentleman at the door wishes to speak to you, sir."

"Tell him I'm out," the professor said brusquely.

"I did," she replied, "but he won't go."

"What! Send him to me and I'll tell him."

The boys were comparing notes on the intellectual achievements of their respective households.

"Father and I know everything in the world," said one.

"You do, do you?" sneered the other. "All right then, where's Asia?"

"That's one of the things my father knows," replied the first boy coolly.

They were artists and they were discussing their work.

"How's business?" asked one.

"Splendid," replied the other. "I just got a commission from a millionaire; wants his wife and children painted badly."

"Great; you're just the chap for the job," said the other pleasantly.

"Papa, are you growing taller?" asked the young hopeful.

"No, my child, why do you ask?" said Daddy.

"'Cause the top of your head is sticking up through your hair."

The victim of the hold-up was trying to affect the highwayman with a touch of sentiment.

"I got that watch from my employer after I'd been with him ten years," he said sadly.

"Golly," said the yegg, "you WAS slow, buddy, wasn't you!"

"It seems to me, my darling, that these pancakes are a trifle heavy," said the young husband soothingly.

"Then I'm afraid you're a poor judge of pancakes," replied his bride, "for the cook book says they are light and feathery."

"Jones expects 100 per cent. disability on his accident insurance policy. He says he is

completely incapacitated by the loss of his thumb."

"What's his vocation?"

"Professional hitch-hiker."

The farmer had caught the little boy up in his cherry tree.

"Hi there," the farmer yelled, "what are you doin' up that tree?"

"There's a sign down there what says keep off the grass," said the boy.

The teacher was quizzing the geography class.

"Now, Willie," she said, "can you tell me where we find mangoes?"

"Sure," said Willie, "wherever woman goes."

The dear old auntie was enjoying a despondent day.

"Ah well," she sighed, "I shall not be a nuisance to you much longer."

"Don't be silly," reassured her nephew, "you know you will."

Mother returned from her bridge party to be greeted gayly by Young Hopeful.

"Mother, we've had the grandest time!"

"Really, dear? Tell me what you did," said Mother.

"We played postman; we gave a letter to every lady in the street."

"But where did you get the letters, darling?"

"Oh, we found 'em in your trunk in the attic, all tied up with pink ribbon."

They were discussing their mutual friend.

"So Hilda's broken it off with Bobby," said the first. "I wonder if she still keeps his lovely letters?"

"No," said the second, "as a matter of fact they're keeping her."

"Got a sweetheart yet, Maggie?"

"Sure, and he's a regular gent."

"Zat so!"

"Ah'll say so. He took me to a restaurant last night and poured his coffee into the saucer

to cool it; but he didn't blow it like common folks do—he fanned it with his hat.”

A couple of pugilists were discussing their literary activities.

“Cheez, kid, dat last article what you wrote fer de paper wuz a knockout,” said one admiringly.

“Dat’s what dey tell me,” said the budding author proudly; “you know, buddy, sometimes I almost wish’t I could read.”

Sign at a busy cross-roads filling station:
“Automobiles washed, one dollar—Austins dunked, 50 cents.”

“Say, Jerry, I got a new job.”

“What doin’?”

“Painting whiskers on Fords.”

“Why?”

“To make ’em look like Lincolns.”

“How long did it take your wife to learn to drive?”

“It’ll be ten years in September.”

He was being tried for speeding.

"Why, judge," he said, "I wasn't going 40 miles an hour—not 30—not even 10—in fact when the officer came up to me I was almost at a standstill."

"Stop! Stop!" yelled the judge, "or you'll be backing into something."

The motorist had just got his pedestrian for the day.

"Hey there you," he called, "you'd better watch out."

"Wassa matter," said the victim sadly, "you gonna back up?"

"How did your father know we were out in the car yesterday?"

"Quite simple. Remember that stout gentleman we ran into? That was Father."

The wrecked motorist wearily opened his eyes.

"What happened?" he asked. "I had the right of way, didn't I?"

200 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

"Yeh," said the bystander, "but the other guy had a truck."

The auto salesman was bearing down.

"Yes, sir," he said earnestly, "of all the cars on the market this is the one we feel most proud to push."

"Push nothing," snorted the prospect. "I want one to ride in."

First aviator: "Quick, what do I do now, instructor?"

Second aviator: "Heavens above, aren't you the instructor?"

The little fellow left in charge of his baby brother called out:

"Come and get the baby, Mother; he's sitting on the fly-paper and there's a lot of flies waitin' to get on."

Pugnacious Bill had just gone to his reward. A few days after the funeral his widow was hanging over the front gate when a neighbor

came along and stopped to commiserate with her.

"Well, poor old Bill," she said, "'e'll be 'itting the 'arp with the hangels now."

"Not Bill," said the widow. "He'll be 'itting the hangels with the 'arp."

It was during the days of wholesale bank failures. The aged Negro had stood in line for hours waiting his turn at the paying teller's window to draw out his savings. Just as he reached the window it was closed with a bang and the announcement made that no more payments could be made.

"Wall suh," said the Negro pensively, "I'se heard of banks goin' bust but I sho never thought I'd have one bust right in ma face."

The housewife asked the German butcher the price of his hamburger steak.

"Twenty-five cents a pound," said the butcher.

"That's ridiculous," said the customer; "they're only charging fifteen cents at the store on the corner."

202 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

"Vel," said the butcher, "vy don't you puy it down dere? "

"They haven't any," she explained.

"Ach, ja," grinned the butcher, "ven I don't haff it I sell it for ten cents."

Maid—"There's a mendicant at the door, ma'am."

Mrs. Newrich—"Well, tell him we haven't anything to mend."

And then there's the one about the man who had to get rid of his pet skunk because the neighbors got wind of it.

The gentleman in the restaurant showed an inclination to go to sleep.

"Waiter, take the fish away," said the lady who was with him.

"Take him away yourself," replied the waiter, "you brought him in."

Father—"Troubled with dyspepsia in school today? Why, that's a strange thing for a boy to have."

Johnny—"I didn't have it; I had to spell it."

"Is your mistress really curious?"

"Rather! I went to look through the keyhole of her bedroom at her and she was looking through the keyhole at me."

The Scotchman was being shown the wonders of the American zoo.

"And that," pointed out his American guide, "is an American moose."

"Moose!" said the Scotchman in awe. "By golly I'd like to see one of your rats."

Mary—"Until I drove a car I never knew there was so much profanity in the world."

Jim—"Do you hear much of it on the road?"

Mary—"Oh yes, nearly everybody I knock down swears horribly."

"Who was Noah's wife?"

"Joan of Arc."

Two gentlemen of color were discussing family trees and Ambrose was very proud of his.

"Yes sah," he said, "I can trace my relatives back to a family tree."

"Well," said his doubting friend, Sambo, "dey ain't but two things what live in trees—birds and monkeys, and you sho' ain't got no feathers on you."

The young man was boasting that his family tree went back farther than Alexander the Great.

"I suppose," sneered his exasperated listener, "you'll be telling us your forefathers were in the Ark with Noah."

"Certainly not," said the young man superciliously, "my folks had a boat of their own."

The American's propensity for exaggeration met its equal in a green-grocer's shop in London.

"Is this the largest apple you have?" asked the American, picking up a large melon.

“Hi there, put that bloomin’ grape dahn, will yer?”

The Hollywoodite was being shown the glories of Europe.

“This is the finest castle in the country,” said the guide.

“You don’t tell me?” said the visitor. “What picture was it made for?”

“Would you endorse our toothpaste for \$5,000?” asked the advertising man of the celebrity.

“For \$5,000,” said the celebrity, “I’d even clean my teeth with it.”

Little Johnny was creating something of a rumpus in the home circle.

“Johnny,” chided Grandma, “I wouldn’t slide down those banisters.”

“Wouldn’t?” snorted Johnny. “Huh, you couldn’t.”

The boss got an early morning call on the phone.

"Hello," said the voice, "John Smith is very sick in bed and won't be able to come to work today. He asked me to phone you."

"Very well," said the boss. "Who is speaking?"

"This is my brother," said the voice.

The magician called for a boy from the audience to assist him in his wonders.

"Now, my boy," he purred when the boy reached the stage, "you've never seen me before, have you?"

"No, Daddy," said the boy.

A couple of good golf players were annoyed one fine spring morning by two dubs in front of them who held them up. Finally the green-horns began a search in the rough. The couple behind came forward to see if they could help.

"Where do you think the ball fell?" one of them asked.

"Ball?" said an angry voice. "I haven't lost a ball; I've lost a club."

They were discussing their neighbor.

"He's the laziest man I ever saw," said one.

"Lazy?" snorted the other. "Why, he's so lazy he runs his car over a bump just to knock the ashes off his cigar."

"How is it you want a raise?" asked the foreman.

"I been and got married," said the worker.

"I can't help that," said the foreman. "I'm only responsible for accidents that happen at the plant."

"There's a man outside," said the secretary, "who wants to see you about a bill you owe him. He won't give his name."

"H'm, what's he look like?"

"Well, he looks like you'd better pay it."

"Lend me a dime fer car fare to look fer woik, buddy?" whined the panhandler.

"Sorry," said the thankful pedestrian, "but I have nothing but a half-dollar."

"Great!" beamed the beggar. "I'll take a taxi."

208 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

"If a man has a beautiful stenographer do you suppose he'll take more interest in his business?"

"I don't know whether HE will, but his wife will."

The fastidious lady drew away as the shabby beggar approached her on the street.

"Go away from me," she said. "I wouldn't have you touch me for ten dollars."

"But I was only goin' to touch you fer a nickel," whined the beggar.

"Yes indeed, she's married to a lawyer, and a good honest fellow too."

"My goodness gracious! Bigamy!"

"Mr. Jones," the man said to his tailor, "how is it you haven't asked me to settle up my account?"

"Oh, I never ask a gentleman for money," said the tailor suavely.

"Indeed, but how do you get on if he doesn't pay?"

"Why," replied the tailor hesitatingly,

"after a certain time I conclude he's no gentleman and then I ask him."

"I just burned up a \$100 bill."

"My gosh, you must be a millionaire."

"If I was a millionaire I'd pay it instead of burning it."

The absent-minded professor was greeted by his wife on the front porch upon his return from school.

"But where is the car?" she asked.

"Dear me," said the worried professor, "did I take the car out?"

"You certainly did; you drove to town in it," said his vexed wife.

"How odd," murmured the professor. "I remember now that after I got out I turned around to thank the gentleman who had given me the lift and he wasn't anywhere to be seen."

The wife of the absent-minded professor was waxing sentimental.

"Do you realize, dear," she cooed, "that it

210 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

was 25 years ago today that we became engaged? ”

“Twenty-five years?” said the professor. “Dear me, you should have reminded me before. It’s certainly time that we got married.”

Then there’s the one about the absent-minded professor who upon being fished out of the water said sadly: “The worst of it is that I have just remembered that I can swim.”

And the one about the absent-minded professor who kissed the door and slammed his wife.

And the absent-minded professor who hid under the bureau and waited for his collar button to come and find him.

“What is a good cure for absent-mindedness?” asked a man of his doctor friend.

“Why, are you absent-minded?” asked the doctor.

“No,” said the other, “but my wife is. She

makes the funniest mistakes. The other day I gave her \$10 with which to buy me some pajamas and she comes home with a pair of shoes for herself."

He had just returned from Europe and was recounting his experiences.

"Ah," he said, "I saw spectacles I can never forget."

"Where can you buy 'em?" asked the old gentleman who was slightly hard of hearing. "I'm always forgetting mine."

The tramp went up to the lady of the house.

"The lady next door give me a piece of home-made cake," he wheedled. "Won't you give me something?"

"Certainly," said the lady, "I'll give you a soda mint tablet."

The Sweet Young Thing was making her first trip to a butcher shop.

"Round steak, madam?" asked the butcher.

"The shape doesn't matter, so long as it's tender," said the Sweet Young Thing.

212 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

"Just had my portrait painted."

"Does it look like you?"

"Not too much."

A girl went into a drug store and asked the druggist for some powder.

"Face, gun or bug?" said the druggist.

"Face," said the girl.

"Mennen's?" said the druggist.

"No, women's," said the girl.

"Do you want it scented?"

"No, I'll take it with me."

"What ho, Rob, yer lookin' sick; what ails yuh?"

"Ah me, work, work, nuthin' but work; work from mornin' till night and you're so sore you can't stand."

"Say, that's tough; how long you been doin' that?"

"I'm startin' tomorrow."

The Scotchman wandered into the drug store.

"I'm wantin' threepenn'orth o' laudanum," he announced.

"What for?" asked the druggist suspiciously.

"For twopence," replied the Scot.

"Where was the Lord born?" asked the Sunday School teacher.

"Allentown," promptly replied the boy pupil.

"No, no," said the teacher, "not Allentown—Bethlehem."

"Well, I knew it was somewhere up in the Lehigh Valley."

Two clothing store proprietors were discussing their business.

"Oi," said the first, "I kent see how you sell your goots so chip. I pinch the lining, I pinch the buttons, I pinch the labor, but I kent do it."

"I pinch the whole soots ready-made," said Abie.

Sandy returned from a visit to London and

handed his mother a present of a barometer. "Aye," said she, "and it's a fine thing to tell the weather by, but ye've been wastin' yer money. What dae ye think the Lord gave yer fayther the rheumatics for? "

It was a homely reunion of old friends and to help the fun the guests were all asked to bring something to the feast. The Englishman brought a bottle of whisky, the Irishman a tin of biscuits and the Scotchman brought his brother.

"Willie," said the teacher, "why do you always add up wrongly? "

"I don't know," replied Willie.

"Does anyone help you? "

"Yeh, my father."

"What is he? "

"A waiter," replied Willie.

Sambo was dead. A splendid funeral was in progress. The preacher talked at great length of the good traits of the deceased brother; what a good, honest man he was, what a good

provider for his family, what a loving husband and father.

The widow grew restless. "Johnny," she whispered, "go up dare and look in dat coffin and see if dat's yore pa."

"My son," said the father who was fond of sermonizing, "this is an age of specialties and specialists. Is there anything you can do better than anyone else in the world?"

"Yeth, sir," chirped the lad, "blow my own nose."

A prohibition lecturer was talking on the evils of strong drink.

"Now supposing," he said, "I had a pail of water and a pail of beer on this platform and then brought on a donkey; which of the two would he take?"

"He'd take the water," came a voice from the gallery.

"And why would he take the water?" asked the lecturer.

"Because he's a jackass," replied the voice.

216 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

A Swede came down from the woods and entering a speakeasy asked for a drink of good old squirrel whisky. The bartender said: "We have no squirrel whisky but I can give you some nice old crow."

"Oh, Yudas Priest!" exclaimed the Swede. "I don't want to fly; I yust want to hop around a little."

A couple of big-timers were pouring 'em in pretty fast at a speakeasy and were showing signs of mellowness. "You know, Bill," one of them remarked sagely, "I think I'll buy this office building."

"Let's have another drink," said the other, "and maybe I'll sell it to you."

"Congratulate me, dear," said the politician, "I have just been nominated."

"Honestly?" said the surprised wife.

"You would bring that up," said the ag-grieved husband.

Willie's mother was putting him to bed for the night.

"Did you say your prayers, William?" she asked.

"I'm not sayin' 'em tonight, Ma," replied Willie, "I'm takin' a chanct."

"I remember when I was a young lad," said the old salt to his grandson, "I had to fight for my life with sixteen fierce cannibals and only one got away ——"

"But Granddaddy," interrupted the little fellow, "last year you told me it was eight cannibals."

"Shure," said the old fellow, "but you was too young then to know the whole horrible truth."

Jim—"What's the scar on your forehead?"

Jack—"Berth mark."

Jim—"But it looks like a wound."

Jack—"So it is. I got into the wrong berth."

1st fat girl—"Kate lost ten pounds in one week by worrying."

2nd fat girl—"I tried that, but I couldn't keep my mind on it."

218 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

He was putting in his first day as an automobile mechanic when a man drove in to have his car greased and oiled. "And while you're about it," he said, "you might as well take out the promiscuous squeaks."

The fledgling mechanic thought a moment. "Mister," he said, "there ain't no promiscuous on a Chevrolet."

Foreman—"What's ailin' yuh, Bill? Hurt yourself?"

Bill—"Gotta nail in me shoe."

Foreman—"Why doncha take it out?"

Bill—"What, on me lunch hour?"

Mrs. Newlywed—"Oh, you did splendidly with the wall-papering, darling. But what are those funny lumps?"

Mr. Newlywed—"Goodness me! I do believe I forgot to take down the pictures."

"What are you doin'?" asked a foreman of one of his men.

"Nuthin'," was the reply.

"Well, there ain't no sense in both of us

doin' the same thing: you get busy and do somethin'."

Lazy Bill—"I got a new job on the railroad."

Tired Jake—"What doin'?"

Lazy Bill—"You know the guy what goes alongside the train and taps the axle to see if everything's all right? Well I helps him listen."

"Hear the latest about old Newrich?"

"No, what about him?"

"He bought a Louis XIV bed but it was too small so he sent it back and asked for a Louis XVI."

Slow waiter—"Your coffee, sir; it's special from South America."

Diner (sarcastically)—"Oh, so that's where you've been."

The girls from the American finishing school were being shown the sights of London. The trip led them past Grosvenor House, which the guide pointed out, saying: "That is the town

house of the Duke of Westminster, one of our largest landed proprietors."

A pretty girl looked up with interest.

"Oh," she squealed, "who landed him? "

"What's Jones doing these days? "

"Workin' in the Bureau of Missing Persons, locating next of kin."

"Heir restorer, eh."

"See that woman? She's a female tattooist."

"You don't tell me! "

"Yep, just married her best customer."

"Had designs on him like as not."

The veteran golfer was very proud of his game and was highly incensed by aspersions cast upon it by a youthful member of the club.

"And let me tell you, sir," he raged, "I was playing golf years before you were born."

"Played much since? " sweetly inquired the young man.

And then there's the shoemaker's daughter who gave the boys her awl.

And the girl who was so dumb she thought a buttress was a female goat.

Teacher—"Why did Joshua command the sun to stand still?"

Jimmy—"I guess it didn't agree with his watch."

"Where's the cashier?"

"Gone to the races."

"What, gone to the races in business hours?"

"Yes sir, it's his last chance of making the books balance."

Mrs. Brown—"I saw a young man trying to kiss your daughter in the park last night."

Mrs. Green—"Did he succeed?"

Mrs. Brown—"No."

Mrs. Green—"That wasn't my daughter."

They were scarcely seated when one of them nudged his shipmate and asked:

"What does that word 'asbestos' mean over the curtain?"

222 *Toasts and After Dinner Speeches*

“Pipe down,” snorted the other, “and don’t show your ignorance. That’s Latin for ‘welcome.’”

